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NOTE

"THE CONGRESSMAN'S WIFE" was awarded the prize of \$2,000 offered by this magazine for the best novelette of from 30,000 to 60,000 words. A complete list of the prize winners in THE SMART SET'S recent competition will be announced in the February number, published January 15th. So many thousands of manuscripts were entered in this contest that an earlier decision by the five judges has been found impossible.

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THE CONGRESSMAN'S WIFE

By John D. Barry

“YES, Washington is never finer than now.” The white-haired Senator stood at the top of the steps of the Capitol and looked benignly across the city. The air was heavy with the rich odor of Spring. The trees were putting out their tender green leaves.

Douglas Briggs nodded. “It will be fine for a few weeks; then we shall have to send our families away,” he said, adding quickly, with a glance at the Capitol, “that is, if they keep us here.”

“It soon becomes unbearable, the heat,” the old gentleman agreed. “We always try to get away before June. I suppose you have to be careful about your little ones.”

“Yes; and then Mrs. Briggs is rather run down, I think. It has been a hard Winter for her—so much entertaining.”

“It’s wonderful how they stand it,” the Senator said, musingly. “But I sometimes think the women bear it better than the men. When I first came here I went about a good deal. But that was more than a quarter of a century ago. The life was simpler then; though, coming from the country as I did, it seemed gay enough. There’s poor Braddon from Kentucky. You knew him, of course. I went down to his funeral the other day. It was this infernal entertaining that killed him—too many dinners. The last time I talked with him he told me he had eaten twenty-three public dinners in something less than three weeks. The wonder is that it doesn’t kill more of them. I suppose it does—only we say they died of something

else.” He looked curiously at Briggs through his big gold-framed spectacles. “How do you stand it?” he asked. Without waiting for a reply, he went on: “But you youngsters don’t mind those things as we old fellows do.”

Douglas Briggs laughed. “Oh, I’m not so young, Senator. I turned forty more than two years ago.”

“But you look very young,” the Senator insisted, amiably. “And I’m always hearing of you at all the great dinners. I see your speeches in the newspapers.”

“Oh, I *speak* at the dinners,” Briggs replied, smiling, “but I don’t eat at them.”

“No,” the old gentleman queried.

“That is, I never think of eating all they put before me. If I did, I should have shared Braddon’s fate long ago. My first Winter of public dinners gave me a fierce attack of gout. Now when I dine out I taste the soup and eat the roast and the salad. The rest of the dinner I pass by.”

The Senator’s eyes twinkled. “Very sensible, very sensible,” he said. He patted Briggs on the shoulder with the kindly patronage of the older man. “That’s why you keep your color and your clear eye. That’s right. That’s right.” He shook his head and his face wrinkled with pleasure. “I only wish we had a few more sensible young fellows like you in Congress.”

They clasped hands at the foot of the steep flight of steps. “I hope we shall see you to-night,” said Briggs.

The Senator shook his head. “Oh,

no; those dissipations aren't for us. We keep away from crowds. But we'd like to see your new house," he added, pleasantly. "My wife and I will look in some afternoon."

Douglas Briggs walked down the street with a glow of amusement and pleasure. He felt proud of his friendship with one of the oldest and most distinguished Senators in Washington. He had reached the age, too, when he enjoyed being treated like a young man; it gave him reassurance. As he passed the White House he noticed a line of carriages extending far up the street. Then he remembered that the President's wife was having a reception. "I ought to have asked Helen to go," he thought. "It's the last chance of paying our respects." Then he was glad he hadn't asked her. She would need all her strength for the night.

This afternoon he was in one of his moods of fine physical exhilaration. He had had an exciting day in the House; but now he turned from all thought of care and looked forward with a boy's delight to the evening. His wife had asked a few people to dinner to celebrate their establishment in their new house, and for the reception that would follow she had invited nearly everyone in Washington whom they knew. As he approached the house he viewed it with a glow of satisfaction. He had secured one of the most desirable corner lots in Washington, and Hanscomb, the best architect in the country, had built on it a residence that Briggs proudly considered an ornament to the city. It would be associated with him as other houses were associated with men conspicuous in Washington life.

When he entered, a young girl met him in the hall. "Oh, here you are! I've been watching for you all the afternoon. Why didn't you come home before, you naughty man?"

She put her arms on his shoulders, and he bent forward to be kissed. "I couldn't," Briggs explained; "I've been too busy."

"Oh, Guy," the girl cried, running

to the broad staircase at the back of the hall, "Uncle Doug has come. Oh, you should have seen us work this afternoon, Guy and me! We've been helping Mrs. Farnsworth with the flowers. I've decorated the dining-room all myself." She seized Douglas Briggs by the arm and tried to drag him with her. "Come along and see."

He drew his arm away gently. "I mustn't now, Fanny. I'll see it by-and-by. I ought to get ready for dinner. Where's your aunt?"

"Aunt Helen's in the drawing-room. She has a caller, I think."

Briggs frowned. "Hasn't she taken a rest?"

Fanny shook her head and looked serious. "I tried to make her, but she wouldn't. She said there were too many things to do. But Guy and I were attending to everything," she concluded, with importance.

Briggs turned away and smiled. "Children asleep?" he asked, as he removed his coat.

"M'm—h'm. Been asleep all the afternoon. Miss Munroe's been a brick. As soon as she got Jack quiet she came down and helped Guy and me decorate the ballroom. Oh, we had the loveliest—"

Briggs had turned away absent-mindedly and started up the stairs. As he passed the door of the drawing-room he heard a rustle of skirts.

"Why, there's your husband now!" a sharp voice exclaimed.

He stopped and turned back. "Oh, Mrs. Burrell, how do you do?" He extended his hand, and the old lady grasped it heartily.

"I've been all over your house," she said. "It's simply the loveliest place I've ever seen. I've just been telling your wife," she went on, "that I don't see how Paradise can be any better than this."

Briggs smiled. Then he turned to his wife and kissed her on the cheek.

"Well, it does me good to see you do that!" Mrs. Burrell declared. "It's the only real homelike thing I've seen since I came to Washington." She took a long breath. "I was saying to

Mr. Burrell yesterday that if we didn't know you and Mrs. Briggs we'd think there was no such thing as home life in Washington."

"Oh, there's a lot of it," Briggs asserted, jocularly. "Only the guilty ones keep it dark."

"It seems to me there's nothing but wire-pulling, wire-pulling, and trying to get ahead of somebody. It makes me sick sometimes. Still, I suppose I'm doing a little of that myself," she went on, with a nervous laugh. "What do you suppose I come here for to-day, Mr. Briggs? I ought to be ashamed bothering your wife just when she's going to have a big party. But I knew it would just break my girls' hearts if they didn't come to-night. So I've asked if I couldn't bring 'em."

"Quite right, quite right," said Briggs, cheerfully, but with an absent look in his eyes.

"It was a mistake, their not receiving cards," Helen Briggs explained. "I know their names were on the list."

"Oh, those mistakes are always happening," Mrs. Burrell replied. "Why, when we had our coming-out party for our oldest girl there were at least three families in Auburn that wouldn't look at me. How I happened to forget to invite 'em I couldn't understand, to save my life. But I didn't try to explain. It was no use. I just let it go."

Douglas Briggs sighed. Mrs. Burrell represented the type of woman before whom he had most difficulty in maintaining his air of confidential friendliness. For her husband, the shrewd old business man from Maine, who was serving his first term in Congress, he had a genuine liking. His weariness at this moment prompted him to make one of his pleasant speeches. When most bored he always tried hardest to be agreeable. "There was no need of your asking for invitations for to-night," he said. "We hope you know us well enough to bring your daughters without invitations."

Mrs. Burrell softened. Her sharp

little gray eyes grew moist. "Well, I think you're just as good as you can be," she said. She looked vaguely about, as if not knowing what to say. "Well, it *is* lovely!" she went on. "It's splendid having these big entries. They're just as good as rooms. And those lovely tapestries on the wall down stairs—where in the world did you get 'em?"

"They were bought for us by a dealer in New York," Briggs explained, patiently. He wondered how long Mrs. Burrell could stand without moving. At that moment she turned and offered her hand to Helen.

"Well, good-bye again. The girls will be waiting for me at the hotel. I guess they'll be glad."

As soon as Mrs. Burrell started down the stairs Douglas Briggs turned to his wife. "You're tired, dear," he said. "You ought to have been resting this afternoon."

"Oh, no. I'm not tired, really." She let him take her hand and smiled back into his face.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing." He pressed her hand more tightly. "Only I'm glad to see you again, that's all."

He placed his left hand on her forehead and drew her head back. Then he kissed her on the cheek.

She drew away from him with a smile. "We haven't much time. We have a great many things to do yet."

"I must take a peep at the children," he said. "I wonder if they're still asleep."

"I think Miss Munroe is giving them their supper."

The children, who had recognized the footsteps, were at the door to meet them. Dorothy, a fat, laughing girl of seven, ran forward and threw herself into her father's arms, and Jack, two years younger, trotted after her.

"Oh, you big girl!" Briggs exclaimed; "you'll take all my breath away."

She kissed him again and again, laughing as his mustache tickled her face. Jack was tugging at her skirts, trying to pull her down.

"Let me! Let me!" he insisted.

Douglas placed Dorothy on the floor and took up the boy. "How are you to-day, sonny?" he asked, as he let the thick, yellow curls fall over his eyes.

"All right," Jack replied, contentedly.

"Been a good boy?"

Jack looked wistfully at the governess, a young woman with red hair, bad complexion and pleasant face.

"No, he hasn't!" shouted Dorothy. "He broke his whip, and when Miss Munroe took it away from him he cried and kicked."

"Oh—h—h!" said Jack's father, reproachfully.

"Well, it was my whip," Jack insisted.

"It's all right," Miss Munroe interrupted. "He said he was sorry."

Briggs walked into the nursery with Jack on his shoulder. It was a large room with four windows, that gave a fine view of the city, with the Potomac winding in the distance. Jack, who at once forgot his momentary disgrace, clung to his father's thick hair.

"Ow, you rascal, let go!" said Briggs. He sank slowly into a chair, and lifting the boy high in the air, deposited him on his knee. Dorothy followed and climbed up on the other knee. She placed a forefinger between her teeth and looked admiringly at her father.

"Papa, is the President coming to-night?" she asked.

Douglas Briggs took her hand and drew the finger out of her mouth. "I've told you not to do that, dear," he said.

She jumped and pressed her head against her father's coat. "Well, is he?"

"I think not, dear," Douglas replied, with a smile. "I'm not sure that we've invited him."

"Oh, how mean!"

"He doesn't go to parties," Jack scornfully explained, with superior intelligence.

"Well, he has parties himself," Dorothy insisted, indignantly.

Briggs extended his hand between

them. "There, there; that'll do. Never mind about the President."

"You're going to be President some day, aren't you, papa?" Jack ventured, with confidence. "Only I'd rather live here than in the White House."

"They say the White House isn't healthy," said Dorothy, repeating a remark she had heard over the stairs.

"Well, papa, when you live in the White House can't we come and stay in this house when we want to?" asked Jack.

Helen Briggs, who had been discussing with Miss Munroe a detail of the decoration for the evening, joined the group. "Jack thinks we'll have to move from this place to the White House," said Briggs. "He's worried about it."

Helen smiled. "It's time for Jack to go to bed."

"Oh, no. Just another minute longer," Jack pleaded.

"I must go and dress," said Briggs. "Now, chicks, climb down." They obeyed promptly, then turned and made a simultaneous attack upon him. He endured their caresses for a moment, then he cried: "Well, that's enough, I think." He rose quietly and kissed them. "Now, go to sleep like good children," he said.

On the way to their room Helen remarked: "Jack is getting so lively Miss Munroe hardly knows what to do with him."

"Oh, he'll be all right," said Douglas. "I like to see a boy with some spirit in him."

An hour later Douglas Briggs entered the dining-room, followed by his wife. Fanny Wallace was already there, talking with Guy Fullerton.

"How do I look?" she cried to her aunt, catching up her long gown. "Isn't it perfectly beautiful? Don't you just love those fleecy things? Won't dad be proud of his daughter?"

"You look very well, dear," said Helen, conservatively.

"Well, you're kind of nice yourself," Fanny remarked. "And

doesn't the gentleman look grand?" she added, to her uncle. "Only," she went on, giving him a little push, "you mustn't let yourself get so fat." Then she glanced at Guy. "Do you suppose he'll be like that when he's forty?"

"I've had a list of guests prepared for the newspaper people," said Guy to Douglas Briggs. "It'll save a lot of time. And I've arranged to have them take supper in a room by themselves. They'll like that better."

Briggs, however, had turned to the servant, who had just come into the room. "Take the men up to the big room over the front door, Michael. That'll be the best place," he went on, to his wife. "And have you arranged about their hats and coats?"

"I've attended to all that, sir," Guy said, eagerly.

Briggs looked relieved. "Well, I guess we needn't worry."

Helen looked up into his face. "I'm not going to," she said, with a smile.

"Is the Secretary of State really coming?" Fanny asked.

"I believe so," her aunt replied.

"If he speaks to me I shall faint away. Ugh!" The girl walked over to Guy Fullerton. "You'll have to do all the talking if you sit next to me. I shall be too scared to say a word. This is my first dinner, you know."

"You poor thing!" Guy began; but Fanny cut him short.

"You are not to make stupid jokes, sir!"

"I'm only afraid you'll talk too much, Fanny," said Helen.

"If she does, we'll send her from the table."

Fanny wrinkled her nose at her uncle. "That funny little Frenchman's to sit on my left," she said, turning to Guy. "Oh, I won't do a thing to him!"

"I want you to be particularly nice to young Clinton, of the British Embassy. He's a first-rate fellow, but very shy. I think perhaps you'll amuse him," said Briggs.

Guy at once looked uncomfortable. Fanny observed him, and laughed.

"I expect to have a lovely time," she said, casting down her eyes demurely.

The dinner proved to be a perfect success. When the great men learned that it was Fanny Wallace's first dinner party they paid her such attention that she let herself go completely and kept them laughing by her naïve impertinences. The sight of young Clinton gave Guy Fullerton great relief; he knew that the blotched-faced, thin and anæmic Englishman, with the ponderous manner of the embryonic statesman, would appeal only to Fanny's sense of humor. Fanny, indeed, was the centre of interest throughout the dinner; even the great men's wives petted her. When the ladies left the table to go into the drawing-room Helen had a chance to whisper to her: "My dear, you've been splendid. I sha'n't dare give any more dinner parties without you."

"Oh, aren't they lovely?" Fanny cried, rolling her eyes. "Only I talked so much I forgot all about eating anything. I'm actually hungry."

The guests for the reception began to arrive shortly after nine o'clock. Long before this hour, however, the sidewalk near the house was crowded with curiosity-seekers, in which the colored population of Washington was numerously represented. Guy hurried from point to point, giving directions to the servants, offering greetings, and showing his fine, white teeth in frank, boyish enjoyment of his importance. As the newspaper people came, he exaggerated his cordiality; some of the men he addressed by their first names. "You'll find the list of guests all ready for you, old man," he remarked, placing his hand on the shoulder of one of them, "in the little room just leading off the dining-room. Down there. And there's everything else you can want there at the sideboard," he added, significantly, with the consciousness of being very much a man of the world. "I knew you newspaper people would like to have a place to yourselves."

II

"WELL, I guess I *am* mad! I've never been treated so in all my life!"

Miss Beatrice Wing swept indignantly down the stairs into the conservatory. The interior of the house, planned after the Colonial fashion, was filled with surprising little flights of steps and with delightful irregularities.

"Still, it was a very good supper," said Mrs. McShane behind her. She kept hesitating before the younger woman's elaborate train. Her voice was one of those plaintive little pipes that belong to many small and timid women. Compared to Miss Wing and her radiant millinery, she seemed shriveled and impoverished.

"Oh, what difference does it make, anyway?" This time the voice was loud and sonorous. It came from William Farley, Washington correspondent of the *New York Gazette*, a thick-set man with a face that was boyish in spite of the fine web of wrinkles around each eye. He looked the personification of amiability, and was plainly amused by the young woman's indignation.

Miss Wing sank into one of the wicker seats and proceeded to fan herself vigorously, throwing back her head and letting the light flash from the gems on her round, white neck. "Well, I believe in standing on your dignity."

"I didn't know we had any," said Farley, with a laugh.

Miss Wing turned to a young woman who was extravagantly dressed in a gray flowered silk, and who had just followed Mrs. McShane down the steps. "Listen to that, will you, Emily? I once heard Mrs. Briggs say that she hated newspaper people," she added, to the group.

Farley looked down from the head of the steps and smiled pleasantly. "That doesn't sound like Mrs. Briggs!"

Miss Wing sat bolt upright and let her fan drop into her lap. "Well, if I had known we were going to be shoved off for supper to a side room

like that, I'd never have come. I didn't come as a reporter, anyway."

"What did you come as?" Farley asked, as he slowly descended the stairs, brushing against the palms on either side. From the other rooms music came faintly, mingled with talk and laughter and clatter of dishes.

"I came as a friend of Congressman Briggs," Miss Wing replied, with spirit.

Farley took a seat at a small table beside the miniature fountain. In the little stream that ran through the grass goldfish were nervously darting. "Wasn't the invitation sent to the office?" He drew out some sheets of paper and proceeded to make notes. He had the air of not taking the discussion seriously. More important affairs were on his mind.

"No matter. It was addressed to me personally." Miss Wing turned for corroboration to Emily Moore, who had sunk into the seat near her.

"So was mine," Miss Moore echoed.

Farley smiled without glancing up from his writing. "How about yours, Mrs. McShane?"

Mrs. McShane, who always looked frightened, seemed at this moment painfully conscious of the shabbiness of her black silk gown. But she managed to reply: "I found mine in my letter-box this afternoon."

"It had been sent to the paper, of course," Farley remarked, decisively, as if expecting no answer.

Mrs. McShane nodded. "I've never done anything like this before. I do the temperance column in the Saturday paper, and the news of the churches."

The young women exchanged glances.

"Oh, well," Farley remarked, cheerfully, "these ladies will help you out. I'm relying on them for the dresses myself."

Miss Wing and Miss Moore rose and walked to the farthest corner of the conservatory. They seemed to wish to indicate by some physical expression that a marked difference existed between themselves and the

shabby, careworn little figure in black.

Mrs. McShane looked relieved. Her face brightened. "It's a beautiful reception, isn't it?" she said to Farley, in an awe-stricken voice.

Farley looked vaguely about the room, as if making an estimate. "Yes," he said, slowly; "it must have cost Briggs a tidy bit of money."

Mrs. McShane opened wide her eyes. "And the champagne!" she whispered.

Miss Wing, who had started to walk slowly back to the table, exclaimed to her companion: "And we didn't have a chance to see anything!"

"Oh, well, you can go in after they've finished," Farley remarked, good-naturedly.

Miss Wing assumed an air of decision. "I shall complain to Congressman Briggs of the way we've been treated."

"Oh, let him alone," said Farley. "He's got enough on his mind. Besides, in our business it doesn't pay to be ruffled by little things."

This remark excited Miss Wing. "Well, I don't see why newspaper work should prevent us from keeping our self-respect. To be treated like a lot of servants!"

"Or like people who have forced themselves in, without being invited!" Miss Moore added.

Farley, however, kept on working. "To do newspaper work," he commented, with exasperating coolness, "you mustn't have any feelings."

"The people you meet certainly don't have any!" snapped Miss Moore.

Miss Wing turned in the direction of the drawing-room, where, from the sound of voices, most of the guests seemed to be gathering. "Well, I'd like to know who these people are, that they presume to treat us so," she said, speaking in a loud voice, as if she wished to be overheard. "Who is Mrs. Briggs, anyway? And who are all this rag-and-bobtail? The Wings of Virginia

have something back of them. They haven't got their respectability from political trickery, at least."

Mrs. McShane, who had been sitting, with bewilderment in her eyes, as if hardly knowing what to do, suddenly appealed to Farley. "I've got to get my copy in by one o'clock at the latest. It must be nearly twelve now."

"Come and get down to work, then, before anyone comes in here," Farley replied. "I suppose you have the list of guests that young Fullerton passed round?"

As Mrs. McShane and Farley bent over the table, the butler entered, bearing a tray covered with cups of coffee. Mrs. McShane and Farley took coffee, which they sipped as they worked. The others refused it. As Farley took his cup he said, "Good-evening, Michael," and the man smiled and replied, "Good-evening, sor."

"I feel like tearing up my list," said Miss Wing, as she held the printed slip in her gloved hand. "I see," she went on, addressing Miss Moore, "they've got the Westmorelands down. Is Lady Westmoreland here?" she asked, as Michael was about to ascend the steps.

"She's been here, ma'am, but she went away before supper."

Miss Wing's lip curled. "Oh, well, they *got* her, didn't they?" Before Michael had time to vanish she cried: "And is Stone here?"

"Who, ma'am?" the servant asked, turning again. His manner subtly conveyed resentment and dislike.

Miss Wing repeated: "*Mr.* Stone."

"He's in the drawing-room, ma'am; I just saw him in there."

Miss Wing turned to her companion. "Just think of their having Stone here! Suppose we go and see if we can find him? I'd like to see how he looks in society. I shouldn't be surprised to find him in his shirt sleeves. Well, Congressman Briggs knows which side his bread is buttered on. He keeps solid with the Boss."

Farley stopped work for a moment. "I wonder who prepared this list!"

he said to Mrs. McShane. "Good idea!"

"How do you happen to be doing society work, Mr. Farley?" the old woman asked.

Farley smiled. "Well, it is rather out of my line, I must admit. If I had to do this sort of thing very much I'd quit the business. But our little Miss Carey is sick, and she was afraid she'd lose her job if she didn't cover this."

The wistful look deepened in Mrs. McShane's face. "So you said you'd do it! You must have a kind heart, Mr. Farley. Oh, I wish they'd give a description of the dresses with the lists of guests!" she added, despairingly. "It would save us a lot of bother."

"I've a good mind to fake my stuff about the dresses," Miss Wing interposed.

Mrs. McShane looked shocked. "But suppose your managing editor should find it out?"

"Pooh! What do editors know about dresses?" Miss Wing spoke with a fine superiority. "I've noticed that they always like my faked things best, anyway."

"You have a wonderful imagination, dear," her friend remarked, admiringly.

"Well, I don't know how I'd ever get through my articles if I didn't have. The last time I went to New York I called on all the leading women tailors and dressmakers, and I couldn't get a thing out of them, and the next day I had to write five thousand words on the new Spring fashions."

Miss Moore rolled her eyes. "What in the world did you do?" she said, with an affectation of voice and manner that suggested years of practice.

Miss Wing smiled. "Well," she replied, after a moment, "I had a perfectly beautiful time writing that article. I made up everything in it. I prophesied the most extraordinary changes in women's clothes. And do you know, some of them have really come about since! I suppose some of

the other papers copied my stuff. And then, I actually invented some new materials!"

The pupils of Miss Moore's eyes expanded in admiration. "I wish I had your nerve!" she said, earnestly.

Under the warmth of flattery Miss Wing began to bloom. "And what do you suppose happened?" she cried, exultantly. "The paper had a whole raft of letters asking where those materials could be bought. One woman out in Ohio said she'd been in New York, and she'd hunted everywhere to get the embossed silk that I'd described."

Farley smiled grimly. "That woman's going to get along in the world," he muttered to Mrs. McShane. "In five years she'll be a notorious lobbyist, with a hundred thousand dollars in the bank."

By this time Miss Wing had tired of the isolation of the conservatory. The interest of the evening was plainly centred in the drawing-room. "Come, dear," she said, drawing her arm around Miss Moore's, "let's walk about and get a look at the people."

As the two women started to mount the steps they were met by a tall man, whose smiling face suddenly lost and resumed its radiance as his eyes caught sight of them. The effect was not unlike that of the winking of an electric light. The women either did not observe, or they deliberately ignored, or possibly they misinterpreted the effect upon him of the encounter. At any rate, it made no appreciable diminution of their own expression of pleasure.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. West?" Miss Wing cried, extending her hand. Miss Moore only smiled; in the presence of her companion she seemed to instinctively reduce herself to a subordinate position.

Franklin West took the gloved hand, that gave a pressure somewhat more prolonged than the conventional greeting. "I'm delighted to see you here," he said, the radiance of his smile once more firmly established. He had large white teeth and brown eyes that would have been handsome

but for their complete lack of expression. His features were strong and bold; his chin would have been disagreeably prominent but for the good offices of his thick black mustache, which created a pleasant regularity of outline. His complexion was singularly clear and pale for a man's, and he had noticeably long and beautiful hands. He might have been forty years of age; he might have been fifty; he could easily have passed for a man of thirty-five. His was plainly one of those natures that turn a smiling front on life. In fact, Franklin West had long since definitely formulated an agreeable system of philosophy: he liked to say that it is far better for a man not to try to adjust circumstances to himself, but to adjust himself to circumstances; that, after all, that is the only true secret of living, especially—but he usually made this comment to himself alone—of living in a city like Washington. At this moment he was adjusting himself to a most unpleasant circumstance, for in his attitude toward women he had a few decided prejudices, one of the strongest of which was typified by Miss Beatrice Wing.

"Where are you going?" he asked, when he had offered his hand to Miss Moore, vainly searching for her name in the catalogue of newspaper correspondents. These newspaper people were great bores; but he must be civil to them.

"Well, we felt like going home," Miss Wing pouted; "but now that you're here, perhaps we'll stay."

West looked at her with an expression of exaggerated solicitude. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"We've been neglected—shamefully," Miss Wing replied.

"They put us in a side room," Miss Moore interposed, "with the reporters."

"It's a mistake, of course," West remarked. "Mrs. Briggs will be very sorry when she hears about it. Have you been through the rooms?"

Miss Wing shook her head. "We haven't been anywhere," she said, plaintively.

"Then let me take you into the drawing-room. Mrs. Briggs is——"

"She's always near where you are, Mr. West," Miss Wing interrupted, with a malicious smile. "I feel as if I had no right to appropriate you." She glanced affectionately at her companion. "Shall we go, dear, or shall we send him back to our hostess?"

"I think we ought to send him back," Miss Moore replied, taking her cue.

Miss Wing turned to West, her face shining with generosity. "So run along. We'll be generous—for once."

For a moment West looked confused. Then he recovered himself. "I certainly do admire Mrs. Briggs, but that doesn't keep me—" he assumed his most languishing look—"from admiring others."

Miss Wing threw back her fine shoulders. "Oh, if you're going to pay *compliments*, we'll certainly keep you. Come along, dear."

III

THE departure of the two women with West gave Mrs. McShane and Farley a chance to work rapidly for several moments. Mrs. McShane, whose years of experience had not given her speed, kept glancing every now and then at Farley in admiration of his skill. He was evidently preparing a general description of the evening, which promised to be remembered, according to Mrs. McShane's report, "as one of the most brilliant events in a Washington Winter remarkable for the brilliancy of its entertainments." The old woman had read that phrase somewhere, and she had already used it several times, each time with a growing fear of detection by her editors. During one of her pauses Farley remarked, pleasantly:

"Inspiration given out, Mrs. McShane?"

"Oh, if I could only write like you, Mr. Farley!" she replied, rapturously.

Farley laughed. "I guess you'll be all right," he said.

"Sometimes I think I oughtn't ever to have gone into newspaper work," the old woman went on, pathetically. "I don't know enough."

"Oh, you don't have to know anything to do this kind of work," said Farley. Then he felt sorry. He looked up quickly, but Mrs. McShane had apparently noticed nothing in the remark to wound her feelings.

"Perhaps I can help you," Farley went on, in a kindly tone. "I've been trying to do my article in a different way from the usual society article. I should think people would get sick of reading the same old things about the entertainments here. Besides, this party is given more to show off Briggs's house than anything else; so I've been giving up a lot of space to a description of the place itself. It's one of Hanscomb's houses, you know—that big Boston architect, who's been getting such a lot of advertising lately. He's one of the best men in his line we've ever had. He's modeled it on the Colonial style, which is fashionable again. I know a little something about architecture. I studied it once for six months in New York, before I began newspaper work. So I'm sort of spreading myself. Now, you might do something like that."

"But that wouldn't be fair to you, Mr. Farley," said the old woman.

"No, I don't mean that," Farley went on. "You might make a lot out of the floral decorations and the color scheme in the rooms. People like to hear about those things. Didn't you notice how the library was in Empire—?"

The old woman shook her head. "Oh, I don't understand about these things," she interrupted. "I don't know enough."

Farley laughed again. "Well, I'll tell you. You see, in the first place, Briggs didn't have a professional decorator, as so many people do nowadays. This place doesn't look like a professional decorator's house, does it? Do you know why? Simply because

Briggs has a wife whose taste is the very best in the world." Farley's face brightened; his eyes shone. "You know Mrs. Briggs, don't you?"

"Yes; I was sent to interview her once. She wouldn't let me interview her, but she was so nice about it I couldn't help liking her."

"Ah, she's fine to everyone!" Farley exclaimed, enthusiastically. "I never knew anyone to meet her without—" He checked himself suddenly, and his face flushed. "But we must get down to work. Look here. You've been over the house, haven't you? Well, I'll describe the principal features as quickly as I can, and you can work 'em up."

"But how about your own article?" Mrs. McShane inquired, anxiously.

"Oh, that'll be all right. I've got it half-done already."

For several moments Farley talked rapidly and Mrs. McShane took notes of what he said. She kept looking up at him in awe of his skill in observation. What a mind he must have, to be able to see so much at a glance! When, at last, she took a moment to speak of this, he replied, with a smile:

"Oh, this isn't the result of my looking the place over to-night," he said. "I know Mrs. Briggs a little, and I've talked the house over with her many times. In fact, I've had a hand in it myself."

As he spoke Farley turned at the sound of a footstep on the stairs. His face brightened, and he started to rise from his seat.

"Good-evening, Congressman," he said.

Douglas Briggs walked quickly down the steps. The exhilaration of the evening made him appear at his best. His gray eye was clear, and his brown hair, and lighter mustache, closely trimmed to his lip, gave him a look of youth.

"Oh, hello, Farley!" he said; "what are you doing here?" Then he observed the little woman at the table. "Why, bless my soul! Mrs. McShane, I'm delighted to see you." He grasped Mrs. McShane's hand cor-

dially; then he turned back smilingly to Farley.

"Great night for you, Congressman," said the journalist.

Briggs shook his head deprecatingly. "For Mrs. Briggs, you mean. This is her affair."

Mrs. McShane gathered courage to speak. "And she's looking beautiful to-night, sir."

Briggs let his hand rest affectionately on the old woman's arm. "My dear lady," he said, in the confidential manner that had won friends for him all through life, "between you and me, she's the prettiest woman in Washington. But you mustn't put that in the paper."

Mrs. McShane glowed. "I won't, sir; but it's true, just the same."

Briggs glanced from Mrs. McShane to Farley and again at Mrs. McShane. "What are you two people doing in here, all alone?" he asked, in the tone of the host who catches his guests moping.

"We're trying to get some notes together," Farley explained. "But we're all at sea about the dresses," he added, with a smile.

The music had just ceased, and they heard a rustle of skirts in the next room. Suddenly Fanny Wallace stood among the palms. As she was looking back over her shoulder she did not observe the group in the conservatory.

"Isn't it good to get out of the crowd?" she said, when Guy Fullerton had come up to her. Suddenly she turned and glanced through the palm leaves. "Oh, I didn't know anyone was here!"

"You're just the person we're looking for, my dear," Douglas Briggs exclaimed. "This is Fanny Wallace, my wife's niece, Mrs. McShane. She'll take you through the rooms. She knows all about the pretty frocks. It's all she thinks about."

Fanny looked reproachfully at Briggs. Then she darted toward the old woman. "Oh, Mrs. McShane, I want you to see Mrs. Senator Aspinwall's dress before she leaves. It's gorgeous." She turned to the youth,

who had dropped into conversation with Farley, and seized him by the coat sleeve. "Mrs. McShane, this is Mr. Fullerton," she said, impressively, "Mr. Guy Fullerton. He's a very important young man," she went on. "He's uncle's secretary. Think of that! *You* can come, too, infant, if you want to," she concluded, with a change of tone. "You need to learn something about frocks."

The young man laughed good-humoredly and followed Fanny, who had unceremoniously taken Mrs. McShane by the arm. As they were disappearing, Farley called out: "I'll rely on you, Mrs. McShane."

Fanny replied for the old woman. "We'll be in the conservatory in half an hour with yards of description. Oh, this is lovely!" she exclaimed, with a little jump. "I always wanted to be a newspaper woman."

As soon as they were alone Farley walked toward Douglas Briggs. "This is a good chance for me to ask you something, sir," he said.

Briggs smiled. "Have a cigar first, won't you? Oh, I forgot. I promised Mrs. Briggs there should be no smoking here. We might go out on the balcony or up to the smoking-room."

Farley shook his head. "Thanks; no. I won't smoke just now. And I won't detain you more than a minute." He hesitated. "What I'm going to ask seems a little like a violation of hospitality," he said, with a look of embarrassment.

"My dear fellow, there's no such thing as a violation of hospitality in the case of a man in public life," said Briggs, pleasantly.

"Well, it's simply this: We want to deny the story about you that's going all over Washington. It hasn't got into the papers yet, but I happen to know that the *New York Chronicle* has it, and is thinking of publishing it."

Briggs looked grave. In repose his face took on years; the lines around the mouth deepened, and the eyes grew tired and dull. "What story?"

"Why, the story that you are in that Transcontinental Railway deal."

"Oh, that!" Briggs threw back his head and smiled, but with a suggestion of bitterness. "Why, to my certain knowledge, they've been saying that about me for the past five years—ever since I entered Congress. In fact, there's hardly been a big political steal that I haven't been in."

"But the *Chronicle* people are pretty strong, you know," Farley insisted.

"I don't give a snap of my finger for them."

"Then you won't let me deny the story for you?" There was a ring of disappointment in Farley's voice.

For a moment Briggs did not speak. Then he said, slowly: "Farley, I know you mean all right, and I know you'd like to do me a good turn. You *Gazette* people have been mighty good friends to me. You've stood by me when I had almost no other friends on the independent press; in fact, no friends."

Farley's brow knotted. "But if you'll only let us show there's nothing in the story!"

Briggs shook his head. "No, not one word! I discovered before I'd been in public life three months it was simply a waste of time to deny campaign stories. When a man goes into politics," he concluded, bitterly, "he makes himself the target of all the blackguards in the country."

"But, Congressman," Farley pleaded, "just a word would be enough."

"No. I'm older than you are, and I know what I'm talking about. I care so little about this particular story that I made a point of getting Franklin West to come here to-night. He's the man, you know, who's supposed to be at the bottom of that railroad scandal."

"There is not another man in your position who would have dared to take the bull by the horns like that," said Farley, his brow clearing.

"I assure you," Briggs replied, reassuming his confidential manner, "it's the only way of treating the bull."

Farley acknowledged the joke with a faint smile. He held out his hand.

"I'm glad to have had this little talk with you, Congressman."

Briggs took the hand firmly. "Look in on me at the House now and then. I may have something for you."

"Thank you," said Farley, as he ascended the steps.

IV

DOUGLAS BRIGGS stood motionless. His face was hot; he could feel his pulse beating in his temples. Sometimes he wondered if he betrayed the fever that the mere mention of that railroad and the scandals connected with it always caused him. The music had begun again, and he could hear the dancers and the loud talk, broken by laughter. Some of the voices he recognized, among them Fanny's and Guy Fullerton's. His wife's voice he could not hear. He started at feeling a hand laid on his arm. When he looked up Franklin West's white teeth were gleaming at him.

"Oh, here you are!" said West. "I've been trying to get a chance to speak to you all evening." He looked hard at Briggs, and the smile faded. "Anything the matter?"

Briggs drew his arm away and West let his hand drop to his side. "Yes. Farley, of the New York *Gazette*—you know him, don't you? I've just been having a talk with him—says the *Chronicle* is getting ready to jump on me."

West lifted his brows with a nice imitation of candor. "About what?"

"About our precious railroad business, of course."

West looked relieved. "They can't hurt you," he said, contemptuously.

"I'm not so sure about that. A paper like the *Chronicle* carries weight. It's not like the small fry that have been knifing me lately."

West turned quickly. This time he betrayed a suggestion of genuine feeling. "But, my dear man, what can they say?"

"They can say what all Washington is saying," Briggs replied,

fiercely. "They can say I've taken money to push that bill through the House. They can queer my re-election."

West drew out a silver ornamented cigar case and offered it to Briggs. "You have a very bald way of expressing yourself sometimes. Have one?"

Briggs lifted his hand in refusal, with a suggestion of disgust and impatience. West deliberately lighted his cigar, puffed it, and then looked closely at the burning end. "Taking money," he repeated, as if addressing the cigar—"that's a very disagreeable expression! It isn't," he added, with a laugh, "it isn't professional." He waited as if expecting to receive a reply from Briggs. Then he asked, with a lift of his eyebrows: "Besides, why shouldn't you?"

"Why shouldn't I what?"

"Why shouldn't you take money for the work you've done? You earned it."

Briggs rose from his seat. His face clouded. "Then why should I lie about it every time the subject is mentioned? Why should I try to bamboozle that decent young fellow who was in this room a moment ago? He believes in me. He believes that I'm an honest man, a statesman, a patriot. He believes that I think of nothing, care for nothing, work for nothing, but the welfare of the people who elected me."

West smiled. "He must be an awful ass!" he remarked, quietly.

In spite of his disgust Briggs gave a short laugh. "He—oh, well." He turned away as if the sight of West had become suddenly obnoxious. "Have you ever believed in anyone in your life, West?" he asked, keeping his face averted.

"Oh, yes," West replied. "In you, for example. I believed in you the first time I saw you. I knew you were going to get there."

Briggs looked at him as if examining a curiosity. "That was why you helped me?"

"Certainly," West acknowledged, with a resumption of his large smile.

"You knew that some time I'd be useful to you?"

"You're brutal now, Briggs."

"Perhaps I am."

"One doesn't refer in that way to any service, however slight," West remarked, in the soft voice of conscious politeness.

"True," Briggs replied, bitterly; "but you must admit the payment has been rather hard."

"Most people wouldn't think so. When you came to me, five years ago, you were on the verge of bankruptcy, and you hadn't even begun to make your reputation." West looked at Briggs to observe the effect of his words. Then he continued, with a wave of his hand: "And now see what you are! You've made a big name. You're a power. You have all the swells in Washington at your parties. If you had gone under, five years ago, you never could have retrieved yourself. You know that as well as I do."

"And how much satisfaction do you suppose my success has given me?" Briggs exclaimed. "Since I began to prosper here I've not had one really happy moment."

West laughed.

"You don't believe that?"

"Of course I don't. You're blue, that's all. That newspaper man has hurt your feelings. That's your only fault, Briggs—you're too easily hurt. You want to have everybody's good opinion."

"I could get along with my own," Briggs replied, quietly.

"By helping to put that bill through the House you're doing the country a thousand times more good than you've ever accomplished through those reform schemes of yours. You aren't practical enough, Briggs. Solid facts are good enough for me."

"I've observed that," said Briggs, without a change of expression.

"But I'll tell you what you can do," West went on, ignoring his host's manner, "since that conscience of yours is bothering you so much. You can vote against the bill. That's what I

wanted to speak to you about. It would be a very good move just now."

Briggs looked interested. "How vote against it?"

"Simply vote," West replied, with a smile and a wave of the hand.

"After all the work I've done for it?" Briggs asked, in astonishment.

"Who's to know about that? If you like you can get up in the House and explain why you've changed your mind."

"*Speak* against it, too?" Briggs could not resist the temptation to lure West on. The revelation of the workings of this man's mind had a fascination for him; they were strangely free from any relation to the principles which, if he had not always practiced, he had always believed in.

"Yes. That will turn the tables on the papers that have been attacking you. It will make you seem like a martyr, too. It's worth thousands of votes to you."

Briggs walked slowly up and down the room. His curiosity had suddenly changed to strong temptation. After all, the scheme was practicable. It was merely another expression of the deceit he had been practicing for years. In spite of his confidence in his safety, it would be wise for him to take every precaution to protect his reputation. The attacks on his character by the opposition papers would probably grow more violent as the time for his re-election approached. But at the thought of getting up in the House and attacking the bill he had worked for, of making himself an object of contempt to the very men who were his partners in the deal, he turned sick. "No, thank you," he said, suddenly. "I may have done worse things, but I couldn't do that!" For a moment, in spite of the sordid quality of his motive, he had the delicious exhilaration of feeling that he had resisted a temptation.

West shrugged his shoulders. "It's what Aspinwall has done over and over again in the Senate. It doesn't seem to hurt him. He's one of the most popular men in the country—

and the biggest fraud," he added, with a laugh.

Briggs had begun to pace the narrow walk of the conservatory. He stopped as if on impulse. "West!" he said.

West looked up in surprise. "Well?"

"I have something to say to you. I'll stand by you in this railroad business till it goes through. I'll vote for the bill, because I've pledged myself to it. You can get along without my vote, I know. The bill is sure to pass. And if there's any odium to be attached to me for supporting it, I'll take the consequences."

"Oh! I thought you were a little nervous about your election, that's all," West remarked, carelessly.

The lines running from the corners of Briggs's mouth deepened. "I've lied pretty constantly so far, and I suppose I'll go on lying till the deal goes through."

"That will be till the next session. We never can bring it up before adjournment."

Briggs apparently did not hear this speech. "But remember one thing," he went on, as if continuing his previous remark, "it's the last official work you need expect me to do for you. Any personal service I shall be only too glad to do. Whatever your motives may have been, you stood by me when I needed a friend. You made my career possible. I should be an ingrate to forget that. But we're quits. In future, I propose to keep my hands free."

West rose from his seat and walked toward Briggs. His face betrayed that he was trying to hide a feeling of amusement. These spasms of virtue on the part of Briggs always gave him a pleasant feeling of superiority. "My dear fellow," he said, laying his hand on Briggs's shoulder, "you've been a brick through the whole business. Stand by me till the bill goes through. That's all we expect. Only don't try to be too ideal, you know," he urged, gently. "Ideals are very pretty things, but they won't work in practical politics.

If the Government were run by ideals it wouldn't last six months. Legislation's a business, like everything else that brings in money, and the shrewdest men are going to get the biggest returns. Think of all the men we've known who've been sent home from Washington simply because they've been over-zealous! But I must hurry back to the drawing-room. I'm in the clutches of two newspaper women. I only broke away for a moment on a pretext. I'll see you later in the evening."

Briggs watched West disappear. Then he sank on the wicker seat again. This interview was only one of many similar talks he had had with the lobbyist; but each new encounter had the effect of heaping fresh humiliation on him. He had always disliked West. The first time he had met the fellow he had felt an instinctive mistrust of him. Now the dislike had become so bitter that he could hardly keep from showing it. Sometimes, indeed, he did not try to hide it, and it seemed as if West only pretended that he did not observe it; or as if, indeed, it only amused him. Briggs recalled, with helpless misery, the steps by which he had bound himself to one of the most notorious corruptionists in politics. He had come to Washington full of ambition and eager for reform, with an inspiring sense that he had been chosen to be a leader in a great work. Soon he discovered how small an influence he was able to exert. After a few months, however, his personal qualities, his faculty of putting himself on confidential terms with people, made friends for him even in the opposition party. The first time he spoke in the House, his remarks, faltering and vague, had made a poor impression. At that trying moment his ease and eloquence had left him. For several months he was too discouraged to try again. He found it easy, as many another man had done, to drift with the political tide. One day, however, he suddenly lost his self-consciousness in a debate on a pension bill in which he had always

taken a deep interest. He threw himself into it with vehemence, making two speeches, that were reproduced in part by nearly all the leading papers in the country. Those speeches gave him a national reputation. The leaders in Congress took an interest in him; their wives discovered that Mrs. Briggs was worth knowing. He took more pride in his wife's success than in his own. He became dissatisfied with his hotel rooms and took a house that proved to be nearly twice as expensive as he thought it could possibly be. In return for hospitalities he had to give elaborate entertainments. His wife remonstrated; he reassured her, and she trusted him. At the end of the year he owed fifteen thousand dollars.

It was then that he had first met Franklin West. He recalled now with shame his own ingenuous dealings with West. In spite of his misgivings, he had accepted the fellow's offer of help; he had placed himself under such obligations that only two courses were open to him, both, as it seemed, dishonorable—to go into bankruptcy and to ruin his future career, or to become West's agent, his tool. At the time, he thought he was making a choice between two evils, and he tried to justify himself by the exigencies of the situation and by the plea that his public services more than justified his course. After all, if the Government did not pay its legislators sufficient to enable them to live as they must live in Washington, it was only fair that the matter should be squared. But it was only in his worst moments that he resorted to this argument.

Like most buoyant natures, Douglas Briggs often had sudden attacks of depression. His talk with Farley, followed by the interview with Franklin West, had taken away all his enthusiasm. Farley, he thought bitterly, had just said that this was a great night for him. Yes, it was a great night. It advertised him before the country as one of the most successful men in Washington and one of the richest men in Congress. What

if the papers did ask where he got his money? They were always asking such questions about public men. He need have no fear of them. It was from himself that his punishment must come.

The opening of the new house, this magnificent ball—what real satisfaction could it give him? He could not feel even the elation of victory. He had won no victory. This ball, this house, stood for his defeat, his failure, for the failure that meant a life of deceit, of concealment, of covert hypocrisy. Even from the woman he loved above the hope of salvation he must hide his real self. He must let her think he was someone else, the man she wanted him to be, the man she had tried to make him. Their children, too, would be taught by her, he would teach them himself, to honor him. They would learn the principles by which he must be judged.

V

"WHAT'S the matter, dear?"

Douglas Briggs looked up quickly. "Oh, is that you, Helen?" He smiled into his wife's face and took her hand. In spite of her matronly figure Helen Briggs did not look her thirty-five years. She had the bright eyes and the fresh coloring of a girl.

"I stole away just for a minute," she said. "I got so tired of smiling."

"So did I. Come over here and let me kiss the tired place." She took a seat beside her husband and turned her cheek toward him, with the amused patience of the married woman who has ceased to be demonstrative. "I know the feeling," said her husband, with his fingers at the corners of his mouth; "muscles in here."

Helen sighed. "Horrid, isn't it?"

"Well, it's all part of the game, I suppose. Whew!"

"What was that for?" she asked, quickly.

Briggs patted her hand. "Nothing, dear; nothing. They say it's a great success."

"I was frightened about the supper; but everything has gone off well."

Briggs looked into his wife's face. "Helen, sometimes I wonder what would become of me if it weren't for you."

"What a foolish thing to say, Douglas!"

"Someone told me to-night that I'd been successful here in Washington because I had such a popular wife. I guess there was a good deal of truth in that."

She drew her hand away and let it rest on her lap. "Nonsense! You've succeeded because you've worked hard, and because you've had the courage of your convictions."

"Oh!" In the dim light she could not see the change of expression in his face.

"And I suppose you've had a little ability, too," she conceded, with a smile.

For a moment they sat in silence.

"Helen!" he said.

"Well?"

"Sometimes I feel as if I hadn't a shred of character left, as if I couldn't stand this political life any longer, with its insincerities, its intrigues, its indecencies. Now, these people here to-night—what do they care about us? Nothing. They come here, and they eat and drink and dance, and then they go away and blacken my character."

She turned quickly, with astonishment in her face. "Why, Douglas!"

"I shouldn't talk like this, dear, especially at this time, when you have so much on your mind." He took her hand again and held it tightly. "Helen, do you ever wonder if it's worth while—all this?"

"This display, do you mean?"

"Yes; this society business. I'm sick of it. Sometimes it makes me—well, it makes me long for those old days in Waverly, when we were so happy together. Even if we were poor we had each other, didn't we?"

"Yes."

"And we had our ambitions and our foolish aspirations. They helped to make us happy."

She drew closer to him. "But they weren't foolish, Douglas. That is, yours weren't. And think how you've realized all you hoped for already!"

Douglas Briggs drew a long breath. "Yes, I've got what I wanted. But the reality is considerably different from what I thought it was going to be. I suppose that's true of nearly every kind of success. We have to pay for it some way. Why, Helen, there are whole days when you and I don't have five minutes together!"

"That's because you have so much to do, dear. I used to mind it at first. But then I saw it couldn't be helped."

"And you've been too good to complain. I've understood that all along."

"I didn't want to stand in the way of your work, Douglas. I could afford to make a few sacrifices, after all you'd done for me."

"Never mind. Just as soon as I can break away from Washington we'll have a good long holiday. If Congress doesn't hang on till Summer, perhaps we can take a little trip abroad. We'll go to Scotland and hunt up those people of yours that your father was always talking about. Then we'll run over to Paris and perhaps see a bit of Switzerland. We'll send the children with Miss Munroe to Waverly and then we'll pretend we're on our honeymoon again. You need the rest and the change as much as I do, dear—more. We'll forget about everything that has bothered us since we began to be prosperous. We'll be boy and girl again, Helen. Why, we haven't grown a day older since we were married—in our feelings, I mean—and to me you're just as young and as pretty as you were that afternoon in your father's study when I told you I couldn't get along without you."

She had allowed her head to rest on his shoulder. "Douglas!" she whispered.

He bent forward and kissed her on the forehead. "And do you re-

member what you said when I told you that?"

"What did I say?" she asked, with a smile.

"You said you'd rather be poor with me than the richest woman in the world without me. You were a very romantic little girl in those days, weren't you? And then I made up my mind to make a great place for you. That's the only real happiness that has come out of my luck here, Helen—seeing you respected and admired by these great people in Washington, the famous men we used to talk about and wonder if we'd ever know." He stopped, then he went on, in a lower voice: "Some of them I know a little too well now. Oh, ho!" he sighed, "I'm afraid I'm growing pessimistic. It can't be I'm getting old without realizing it. See these two lines that are coming on my forehead. They grow deeper and deeper with every session of Congress."

"They'll go away when you take your vacation, Douglas," she said, reassuringly.

"And you haven't a line in your face, dear," he said, looking at her with a husband's proprietary pride.

She shook her head. "Oh, yes, around the eyes. They're plain enough when I'm tired."

"No matter, you always look the same to me. I sha'n't ever see 'em," he went on, exultingly. Then he sighed again. "What a fine thing it would be if we could give our poor brains a vacation, if we could only stop thinking for a few weeks! But for some of us the waking up would be—well, it wouldn't be cheerful. Helen, the other night I dreamed that we were back in the little cottage in Waverly, where we lived during the first year of our marriage. I could see the old-fashioned kitchen stove and the queer little furniture, and your father's portrait over the mantel in the parlor. It all seemed so cheerful and restful and happy and innocent. There you were, in that pretty little house dress you used to wear—the one I liked, you know,

with the little flowers worked in it. We were just two youngsters again, and it seemed good to be there with you all alone. Then I woke up, and a thousand worries began to buzz around my head like an army of mosquitoes, and I had that awful sinking of the heart that you feel after you come back from a pleasant dream and have to face reality again."

They heard a rustle of leaves behind them. Instinctively they drew away from each other. Then they heard Fanny Wallace exclaim:

"Oh, here they are!"

Fanny was out of breath, and young Fullerton was waving his crush hat before his face. They had evidently been dancing desperately.

"Oh, auntie," the girl panted, after a moment, "the great Mrs. Senator Aspinwall is going, and she's looking around for you, to say good-night. What in the world are you doing here?"

"Mr. Stone is moping in the drawing-room, sir," said Guy, respectfully. "He looks as if he wanted to eat somebody's head off."

Briggs smiled and passed his hand over his face. "I don't believe Stone enjoys parties. He feels more at home at his club. I suppose we ought to go, Helen." He rose wearily and stretched out his arms. "What a bore it is!" he said.

As soon as they had left the conservatory Fanny turned to her companion. "Uncle and auntie are just like lovers, aren't they? Do you suppose you'll be like that when you've been married ten years?"

Guy lost no time in seizing the advantage. "That'll depend a good deal on you," he said, insinuatingly.

Fanny drew back from him and tried to look taller. "What a horrid thing to say! You make me very uncomfortable when you talk like that." But she could not maintain a severe demeanor for more than a moment. "Isn't it beautiful to be allowed to stay up just as late as you please!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "It makes me feel really grown up. It's almost as good as wearing long

dressess. Just listen to that music, will you?" She struck an attitude, her arms extended. "Want to try?" she asked, holding her hands toward the young fellow.

He fairly dived into her arms, and they swung about together, brushing against the palm leaves and breathing hard. Suddenly she thrust him back from her and continued alone.

"You haven't improved a bit. Oh-h-h!"

From the waltz Fanny broke into a Spanish dance she had learned at school, using her fan with a skill that caused Guy to break into applause. "Oh, isn't it great!" she cried. "I could dance like this all night. Look out! Don't get in my way and spoil it!" While in the midst of one of her most elaborate effects, she suddenly stopped. A voice had just exclaimed:

"What in the world are you two people doing?"

Fanny turned and confronted a large, smooth-faced, white-haired individual, who was looking down in astonishment from the head of the steps.

"Oh, is that you, dad?" she said, tossing back her hair. "I'm just practicing being in society. How'd you like it?" Then she went on, glancing at Guy: "Oh, you haven't met dad, have you? Well, this is *it*, dad—Mr. Fullerton, Mr. Guy Fullerton."

Jonathan Wallace walked deliberately down the steps and offered Guy his hand. "How do you do, sir?" he said, with ponderous gravity.

Before Guy had a chance to speak Fanny broke in: "Mr. Fullerton's the young man I've been writing to you about—the one that's been so attentive this Winter. Here, come and let me fix that tie of yours." She gave her father's tie a deft twist and patted the broad shoulders. "There! That's better. Now they'd never know you come from the country."

Wallace turned to Guy. The expression in his flushed face began to soften. "You mustn't mind *her*," he said, quietly. "She's always letting her tongue run away with her. We

let her talk to keep her out of worse mischief."

Fanny walked over to Guy, who looked as if he were trying hard to think of something worth saying. "Well, you have been paying me attentions, haven't you, Guy?" she said, her voice growing tender as she finished the question. Then she triumphantly exclaimed to her father: "Now!"

Guy was plainly embarrassed. He tried to assume a careless air. "Oh, yes, I've been giving Miss Fanny all my spare time," he replied, entering into the joke.

The face of Jonathan Wallace grew severe again. "You could find better use for your time, I haven't a doubt," he said, without looking at the young fellow. "Well, sis, I'm going home. I've had enough of this rabble. I've rubbed up against politicians enough in the past half-hour to make me hate my country. To hear 'em talk you'd think the country'd been invented to support their families. This is the most selfish town I've ever been in. It's every man for himself and nobody for his neighbor."

"There is a lot of wire-pulling going on here, that's true, sir," said Guy.

"Wire-pulling!" Wallace's face expressed a profound scorn. "There was a fellow in the other room mistook me for the Secretary of State, and he buttonholed me for half an hour, talking of the vast benefit he could confer on the country by being made Minister to Austria. Minister to Austria! I wouldn't give him a job as an errand boy in my factory."

Fanny threw her arms around her father's neck. "Poor old dad! he does have such a hard time whenever he comes to Washington. Don't you, dad?"

She drew her hands away and danced behind Wallace's broad back, jumping on her toes and smiling satirically over his shoulder at young Fullerton, who had assumed his gravest expression.

"Then there is another fellow," Wallace went on, addressing the boy,

"who's been trying to work me because I am related to Briggs's wife. I forget what he wanted, now. Some job in New York. If I had to stay in this town ten days at a stretch I'd lose my reason. Talk about serving the country! Rifling the country is what those fellows are doing. If I had the power I'd clap the whole gang of 'em in jail."

"Dad, you are very cross to-night," said Fanny, decisively. "You'd better go home. Think how I feel, having you talk like that before this rising young politician."

"Well, sir, if you intend to make a politician out of yourself I'm sorry for you. I'm going, sis."

Fanny seized him by the lapel of his coat and kissed him twice. "All right, get your beauty sleep," she said, protectingly. "Good-night. And be sure to put on your scarf and turn up the collar of your coat. I'll go down to the hotel and take breakfast with you to-morrow if I wake up in time."

"Better be sensible and stay in bed," Wallace grumbled.

"Good-night," Fanny repeated.

Wallace bowed to Guy. "Good-night, sir," he said, as he turned to go out.

"Isn't he a lovely father?" said Fanny. "Oh, you needn't be afraid of him. I just do this to him," she exclaimed, twirling her little finger—"except—oh, I know when to let him alone. Sometimes he's dangerous. Oh, here comes Aunt Helen and that horrid Mr. West. What do you suppose would happen if Mr. West took his smile off? D'you suppose there'd be anything left?"

Helen Briggs looked surprised at seeing the girl. "Your uncle told me you had gone away with Mrs. McShane, Fanny," she said.

"Oh, she found Madame Alphon-sine, the dressmaker," Fanny replied, "so I wasn't any use."

West glanced significantly at the young people. "I hope we aren't interrupting a tête-à-tête," he said, with exaggerated politeness.

Guy tried to assume a careless air.

"Oh, not at all, not at all," he said, grandly. He objected to West's amiable air of patronage.

"Let's go into the ballroom, Guy," Fanny whispered.

Guy hesitated. He looked wistfully at Helen. "Can I do anything for you, Mrs. Briggs?"

Helen shook her head. "Just amuse yourself, that's all."

Fanny seized the boy by the arm and drew him toward the steps.

"Guy's always trying to earn his salary. I never knew anyone who worried so much about it."

West took a seat on the wicker divan beside Helen. "He's an exception here in Washington, then, isn't he?" he remarked.

"He's a good, conscientious boy. I sometimes wonder if this Washington isn't hurting him."

"There's so much wickedness here, do you mean?"

"So much wasting time," Helen replied, seriously.

West drew one of the palm leaves between his fingers. "Don't you think you are—well, just a little too scrupulous about these matters?" he asked, keeping his eyes turned from Helen's face.

Helen laughed. "That's what Douglas is always saying. You aren't going to blame me, too, are you?"

West let the palm spring back from his hand. He tried to look serious. "I should be the last man in the world to blame you for anything, Mrs. Briggs," he said, softly. "I admire you too much as you are."

Helen took her fan from her lap. He could see that her face had flushed. "Aren't we complimentary to-night!" she said, with a smile. "Do you often say things like that?"

"No. I'm not much of a hand at paying compliments." West leaned back and took a long breath. "Besides, it would be very hard to pay compliments to a woman like you." He leaned forward and allowed both his hands to fall to his knees. "Do you know why?" he went on. "Because you are one of the few women I've met whom I really respect. I pay

you the compliment," he laughed, "of telling you nothing but the truth."

"That's the best compliment any woman could be paid, isn't it?" said Helen, fanning herself nervously.

West leaned toward her. "But there are some things I have never quite dared to tell you," he remarked, in a low voice and with a smiling lift of the eyebrows. "I've never dared, because—well, perhaps they would be too interesting. There are some things, you know, that it's very hard for a man to say to a woman, especially to a woman like you."

"They are usually the things that are better left unsaid, aren't they?" Helen remarked, quietly.

"Perhaps." He spoke slowly, as if trying to keep his voice steady. "But sometimes it is almost as hard not to say them. It isn't always necessary to put them into words, you know. They say themselves in a thousand ways—in a look, a tone of the voice, in the lightest touch of the hand."

Helen sat suddenly upright. "You are in a very sentimental mood to-night, aren't you, Mr. West? I'm prepared to receive all kinds of confidences." Her assumption of gaiety was betrayed by the expression of her eyes.

"I was going to tell you something," West acknowledged. "I think I will tell you. I'm in love. I'm in love with the most fascinating woman in Washington."

"We all know who that is," said Helen, smiling bravely. "But aren't you afraid of the Senator? They say he's a wonderful shot."

West looked injured. "You're laughing at me now, aren't you?"

"It's very hard to take you seriously sometimes, Mr. West."

West apparently did not notice the suggestion of satire in Helen's voice. He did show impatience, however, at the interruption that took place as soon as Helen had spoken.

"Here she is! Everybody is looking for you, auntie! Uncle Douglas is out on the terrace with Mr. Stone,

and there's a whole raft of people waiting to say good-night."

Fanny Wallace made a pretty picture as she stood half-hidden by the foliage. Her faithful attendant waited in the background.

Helen rose and turned to West, who offered his arm. "Shall we go? I'm afraid I'm behaving very badly to-night," she said.

VI

In the drawing-room Douglas Briggs found Stone standing disconsolate in a corner. The Boss was plainly out of his element. The politicians who stood near him either had no personal acquaintance with him or belonged to the opposition party. One of these, indeed, the white-haired Senator from Virginia, had recently made a bitter attack on him in a magazine article. It was the first attack that had persuaded Stone to break silence under censure, and the bitterness of his reply showed how deeply he had been hurt. He seemed now to be ostentatiously unconscious of his enemy's presence; but when the host appeared his face assumed a look of intense relief.

"I've been looking all over the place for you," said Briggs, fibbing, as he often did, to cover a momentary embarrassment. The presence in his house of Jim Stone, on so conspicuous an occasion, had caused him considerable perturbation. He knew, however, that the Boss had come out of personal friendliness and as a mark of special favor.

Stone had no small-talk, and stood in silence waiting for Briggs to make some statement that would lead up to a discussion of their mutual interests.

"Have you seen my wife?" Briggs asked, glancing at Helen, who was already surrounded by a group of chattering matrons. A moment before Helen had mentioned that Stone had shaken hands with her, without, however, entering into conversation.

"Yes, I saw her when I came in,"

the Boss replied, indifferently. The animated scene in which he found himself evidently annoyed him.

"Suppose we walk out on the balcony," said Briggs, desperately. Stone nodded, and they slowly made their way through the crowd, Stone without speaking and looking straight ahead, and Briggs exchanging a few smiling words with those of his guests whom he could remember by name. At his wife's parties he frequently sustained long conversations with people whom he could not remember to have seen before, but whom he impressed by his interest and friendliness. It was this faculty of being agreeable that made enthusiastic young girls say of him: "When he is talking with you, he makes you feel that you're the only person in the world he cares anything about."

His natural keenness and his long experience with men of Stone's type made it plain to Briggs that the Boss had in mind something that he wished to discuss. He decided to give Stone an opening.

"I see by the papers to-night that you're leaving town to-morrow."

"Yes; I shall take the noon train," Stone replied, dropping into a seat where he could look down the wide avenue. The air was warm and heavy, and the electric light fell in soft showers through the foliage of the trees. Hansom cabs and coupés were passing along the asphalt pavement. Around the canopy leading across the sidewalk to the front door the group of unwearied curiosity-seekers watched the departing guests. Stone observed these details as if they had no interest for him. He had the curious eyes of the man who seems to be always looking within.

"I must be getting over to New York myself pretty soon," Briggs remarked, tentatively.

"You'll find some people there who'll be glad to see you." For the first time in their talk Stone showed interest. "The boys would like to talk over a few matters with you. They don't like the way things are going lately."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Briggs, quietly.

"They think you're going back on 'em."

For a moment they listened to the clatter of the horses' hoofs in the street. Then Briggs asked: "What has given them that impression?"

"Well, they say you're getting too high and mighty for 'em. You ain't looking out for their interests. They say you've been making altogether too many concessions to the kid-glove fellows." Now that Stone had escaped from the drawing-room he was limbering up, getting back his usual confidence and his air of authority.

"I don't believe I quite know what they mean by that," Briggs said, with a laugh.

"Oh, I guess you do," Stone went on, easily. "That is, you will," he explained, suddenly realizing that he was a guest talking to his host, "if you take a little time to think it over. I knew what they meant, and I'd been thinking pretty much the same things myself. The only trouble with you, Briggs, is, you're too easy. You don't seem to remember that we're not in politics for our health. Those fellows think we ought to do all our work for glory. They've got plenty of money themselves, and they believe we ought to get along without any."

"I suppose there's some truth in that," Briggs acknowledged.

"But don't you let them fool you," Stone went on. "They're in the game for what they can make, just as you and I are; eh? I know 'em. When they want anything from me they come and fawn and lick my boots, just as the dirtiest of my heelers do. Then, when they find I won't budge, they call me a thief and a scoundrel. I've observed, though, that in spite of being the most abused man in the country I manage to run things pretty much as I choose. Now you take warning by me. I can see plain enough that you are getting farther and farther away from the party. If you don't look out you'll find yourself high and dry. If you lost your grip on the machine, d'you suppose the

kid-glove crowd would have any use for you? Not a bit of it."

Briggs kept silence for a moment. In the presence of this man he felt curiously helpless. Whatever might be said against Stone as a public influence, there was no doubt that he was a man of extraordinary force and self-confidence.

"Still," Briggs said at last, "I've got to stand by my convictions, Mr. Stone."

"Oh, keep your convictions! But don't let them make you forget you're here in Washington because your party sent you here. Now, if you do what your party wants you'll be all right. If you pull off your renomination next Fall you'll have to do something for the boys. They won't have any more shilly-shallying. I know that, because I've heard them say so."

Briggs smiled grimly. "Well, sir, I must say I appreciate your frankness."

Now that Stone had delivered his warning, the significance of which he knew Briggs would fully appreciate, his manner softened. "I say these things to you because I like you. You're a credit to the machine. You've done mighty well here for a young man. Only don't forget that it was the machine that made you. That's the point. Well, it's about time for me to be going. You've got a fine place here. By Jove! I envy you myself."

Douglas Briggs did not stir. He was thinking hard. The loss of his renomination in the Autumn had not occurred to him even as a possibility. He had believed that, with Stone's support, he was firmly established in New York.

"It's very early yet, Mr. Stone," he remarked, absently.

VII

As this evening marked her first "grown-up party," Fanny Wallace had entered with delight into the festivities. She had danced nearly all the dances, most of them with Guy

Fullerton, who stood at the door of the ballroom and watched her hungrily while she was waltzing with other men. Now she was exhausted, but, in spite of her aunt's hint, repeated several times, determined not to go to bed. "Let's go where we can be alone," she said to Guy. "Then you can fan me till I get a little breath, and entertain me. I've done so much talking ever since we got acquainted I actually don't know whether you can talk or not."

Guy, who liked her little jokes, even when they were directed against himself, agreed enthusiastically. They passed from room to room, only to find a group of people in each.

"I don't suppose there's any use in trying the library," said Fanny at last, with a sigh. "But perhaps no one's there. It's about time people were going home, anyway," she added, tartly.

On entering the library she uttered a cry of delight. "Not a soul!" she exclaimed. "Isn't all this leather furniture nice? I just love green leather. I made auntie promise that she'd have it. Here, you fix this big chair for me, and bring up that foot-rest. Yes, that's it. Oh, I do wish they wouldn't make furniture so *tall*. There, that's lovely! Now you can sit on that chair—yes, that one, and don't bring it too near, please. That's right." She sank back luxuriously and folded her hands in her lap. "Now you can tell me—let me see, what can you tell me? Oh, talk to me about your life at Harvard. You haven't told me half enough about that."

"Well, there isn't much to tell," said Guy, with a smile, as he stroked his thick, blond hair.

"There isn't? Well, you ought to be ashamed to say so. Did you work *very* hard?"

"Well, not *very*," Guy replied, with an amused glance from his blue eyes.

"What did you do, then?"

"Oh, I did lots of things."

"Such as what?"

"Well, the best thing I did was to make the Pudding."

"What!" Fanny sat bolt upright.

"Yes. I made the first ten of the Pudding," Guy explained, modestly.

"Great, wasn't it?"

"What in the world are you talking about? Is it possible you're guying me? Well, I'm ashamed. I didn't think you'd try anything like that on me!"

"Oh!" Guy's face lighted up. "I thought you knew what that meant. Please excuse me. Why, I wouldn't guy you for anything in the world. The Pudding's one of our crack societies, that's all, and the men are elected in batches of ten. It's a great compliment to be on the first ten. I was awfully proud of it."

Fanny looked humbled. "I'm just a country girl, after all," she acknowledged. "And you're the first Harvard man I've ever known. There!" Suddenly she resumed her usual manner. "Now, don't you take me down like that again, Guy Fullerton. If you do I'll—Well, tell me about your old society."

Guy controlled an impulse to rush over and kiss her. He never loved her so much as when she bullied him like that, especially if her bullying, as often happened, followed a moment of contrition or self-abasement.

"Well, it's all right as a society. The best men in the class belong to it—that is," Guy explained, with a blush, "a lot of the fellows are perfectly fine. Oh, I wish you could have come to my class day!" he broke out. "A lot of us, together in the gym—that is, the——"

"Oh, I guess I know what the *gymnasium* is!" Fanny snapped. "I suppose you had just heaps of girls there!"

"Oh, yes; heaps!" Guy continued, innocently. "All the fellows said that we had the prettiest——"

"Stop!"

Guy stopped, astonished.

"I don't want to hear about your pretty girls." She turned her head away, and Guy hesitated. Then she gave him a sidelong glance and one of her most amiable smiles.

"Well, never mind," she conceded.

"Tell me about it—girls and all. You didn't really care much for any of 'em, did you?"

Guy met her eyes with a smile. "Well, I thought I did at the time, but I've changed my mind since."

Fanny kicked out her feet. "Oh, the poor things!" she exclaimed. "I suppose you made 'em think you'd never forget 'em. Well, anyhow there's *one* girl that's on to you." She clapped her hand to her mouth. "Oh, I'm glad dad didn't hear me say that. He says if I don't stop talking slang he'll cut off my allowance. Well, now go on. Tell me some more about the Pudding. Why, of course, the *Hasty* Pudding. I once went with Aunt Helen to some theatricals they gave in New York. That was three years ago. Did you ever take part in their theatricals?"

Guy fairly beamed. "Did I? I was the *Princess* in 'The Princess and the Dwarf.'"

"A girl's part!" cried Fanny, with a woman's horror at discovering even a remote suggestion of effeminacy in a man she likes.

"Yes; why not? It was great sport."

"But why didn't they let you be a man?"

"Oh, they said I'd do better for a girl," Guy replied, flushing. "You see, with my smooth face I could make up to look like a girl easily enough."

"It must have been kind of fun," Fanny acknowledged. Then she asked: "Did you wear—?—did you?"

Guy nodded. "It was awful getting 'em on. They made me hold my breath till I thought I'd nearly die. Then two of the fellows fastened 'em. I didn't draw a comfortable breath the whole evening. Gee! It was fierce."

Fanny clapped her hands. "Oh, how I wish I could have seen you!"

"I've got some of the pictures," Guy remarked, tentatively.

"Here?" Fanny exclaimed.

"They're up in my trunk somewhere."

"Oh, you mean thing! You've had

'em all this time and never showed 'em to me! Well, that's just like a man! And you might have known I'd have given anything to see 'em."

"Well, I'll bring 'em down tomorrow," Guy promised.

"And what else did you do in your old club?"

"Oh, we used to have all kinds of sport," Guy replied, feeling the difficulty of explaining to the feminine mind matters exclusively masculine.

"And didn't you do any work at all in college?" Fanny cried, petulantly, with the exaction of serious accomplishment that all women make on men.

"Ye-e-s," Guy replied. "I used to work pretty hard at examination times. But I wasn't a grind, you know," he added, quickly, as if defending himself from a reproach.

"What's a grind?"

"Why, a fellow that does nothing but study—just grubs. It's awful to be like that!"

Fanny sat upright again.

"Well, I declare!" she said. Then she sighed. "You're the funniest thing!"

"There were some fellows I knew," Guy conceded, "who could do a lot of work and yet go in for all the society things; but they were wonders. I never pretended to be much at study, you know. If I got through my 'exams' by the skin of my teeth I considered myself lucky."

Fanny looked at him thoughtfully. "Well, you're kind of a nice boy, just the same." She cuddled in the corner of the chair and crossed her arms, with her hands clasping her shoulders. "I never was much at lessons myself," she admitted. Then she turned quickly toward the door. "*Sh!* I hear some people coming."

From the hall they heard a woman's voice. "Well, I declare! I feel played out. I've done nothing but bump against people all the evening; all kinds of people, too. I never saw so many nationalities in all my life."

"It's Mrs. Burrell," Fanny whispered. "You know her, don't you?—that queer old woman from Maine,

with the three daughters. Let's go out."

Mrs. Burrell had entered the room, and started on discovering Guy. Fanny was hidden behind the back of her chair. "Excuse me, if we're intruding," she said to Guy, with effusive politeness and a bow that somehow suggested an intended curtsey.

Fanny lifted her head like a Jack-in-the-box. "Oh, not at all, Mrs. Burrell. How d'you do?"

The old woman started. "How you scared me!"

Three young girls had come into the room, followed by a youth whose deep black and carefully curled mustache at once revealed his race. A shriveled little man with thin white hair and beardless, wrinkled face, enlivened by a pair of keen eyes, walked loosely behind.

Fanny nodded to the girls and rose from her seat. The Frenchman greeted her with an elaborate bow. Guy looked uncomfortable, but Fanny did not try to relieve his embarrassment by introducing him. It was Mrs. Burrell who broke the silence.

"Ain't it fine here to-night?" she said. "Well, Washington's a wonderful place! Here's Emeline's been speakin' French to Musseer de Lange on one side, and Gladys has been talkin' German to—" She looked round at the girls. "Where is he?" she asked.

"I think we have lost him in the crowd," the Frenchman explained, with a look of distress on his face. He had evidently been having a hard time.

"I guess Gladys's German was too much for him," said the tallest and least pretty of the girls.

"I've asked you not to say things like that, Carrie Cora," said Mrs. Burrell.

The old gentleman, who had been looking with a dazed expression at the book shelves and at the etchings on the walls, now spoke for the first time, turning, with a smile, to Fanny.

"Carrie Cora an' I are the plain

ones of the family," he said. "English is good enough for us."

Mrs. Burrell sank into one of the leathern chairs. "Well, it's kind of a relief to get out of that crowd. You go over there, Emeline, an' go on talkin' French with musseer."

The look of distress deepened in the face of the Frenchman, who, however, made a place for the girl.

Fanny had edged toward Guy. "Let's get away," she whispered. "We haven't had more than ten minutes alone the whole evening."

Guy's face brightened. "I don't believe there's anyone in the conservatory."

As Fanny started for the door she asked: "Aren't you girls dancing?"

Mrs. Burrell answered for them: "I've been urg'in' them, but they won't."

"I don't know how," the eldest girl explained, with a note of resentment in her voice, which her mother at once detected.

"I should think you'd be ashamed to say so, Carrie Cora, after all them lessons last Winter."

"It's too hot in there," said Gladys, who, being the prettiest, evidently considered that she need not try very hard to be amiable.

"Well, good-bye," said Fanny, unceremoniously. "Come on, Guy."

Mrs. Burrell followed the slim figure with an envious look in her eyes. "Ain't she the bright little thing?" she remarked, addressing her husband. "I wish our girls was more like her. She'll marry someone 'way up. You see if she don't."

"Oh, I guess our girls can hold their own against anyone, Sarah," Burrell replied.

"Well, I'm sure they've had advantages enough," Mrs. Burrell grumbled. "I don't see why they don't get more attention, though."

Burrell's eyes sparkled with irritation. "Well, they get attention enough when they're at home. That's where they ought to be."

"I just hate to hear you talk like that, father. You don't seem to have no ambition for the children."

"I've brought 'em up respectable, an' given 'em enough to eat an' drink, an' I've expected 'em to marry decent fellers in their own station in life. I married a farmer's daughter, an' I ain't had no call to regret it; an' what's good enough for me is good enough for them."

Mrs. Burrell refused to be mollified by the compliment. "Well, times are changed since then, an' I guess I ain't a-goin' to have those girls' education wasted. What did we come here to Washington for, anyway?"

"Well, that's the very question I've been askin' myself ever since we landed here. What in hell did we come here for? I wish I'd stayed down in Maine, where I belong. I'm somebody down there. But here there's hardly anybody thinks I'm worth speakin' to. There's not a man here that's asked me to have a drink with him to-night."

Mrs. Burrell rose from her seat with quiet dignity. "If you're goin' to begin to talk like that," she said, in a low voice, "I'm goin' home. I declare, these parties are only an aggravation, anyway. Come on, girls." She walked toward the little Frenchman and offered her hand. "Good-night, musseer," she said, with a large smile.

The Frenchman bowed low again. "Good-night, madame." He touched the tips of her fingers with his small, gloved hand.

"I don't believe I like those Frenchmen," whispered Mrs. Burrell, as the family started to leave the room. "You never can tell whether they're laughin' at you or not."

"I guess nearly everybody's beginning to go," said Carrie Cora, briskly. "Let's hurry up, or they'll think we want to be put out. Oh, say, look out there, will you? There's that Mr. West, that they say is so attentive to Mrs. Briggs. He's been drinking champagne and punch all the evening. See how red his face is!"

"Hold your tongue, Carrie Cora," said Burrell.

"And talking with Mrs. Briggs, too," cried the youngest daughter.

"Here they come. Let's get out of the way. They'll think we're spying on them."

VIII

THE Burrells came face to face with their hostess in the wide hall. "I wondered what had happened to you," said Helen, leaving West, who strolled into the library, and joining the group. "Have the girls been enjoying themselves?" she asked, turning, with a smile, from the mother to the three daughters.

"Oh, yes, we've all been having a lovely time!" Mrs. Burrell replied, her eyes shining with enthusiasm.

"Oh, yes, lovely!" the girls cried together.

"Of course," Mrs. Burrell went on, with a wistful look, "after they get better acquainted they'll have more partners."

"Ma!" exclaimed Carrie Cora.

"But let me introduce you to some of the gentlemen," said Helen, solicitously. "We'll go back into the drawing-room."

"No," Burrell interposed. "We must go home. We ought to have gone long ago. I'm sorry not to have had a chance to talk with your husband about that law case of mine, Mrs. Briggs."

"I'll speak to him about it, Mr. Burrell," said Helen. "Now that Congress is nearly ready to adjourn, he'll have more time. Is it to come before the New York courts?"

The old man nodded. "Those New York men have infringed on my patents, confound 'em! Mrs. Briggs, there ain't anybody else I'd trust as I do your husband. He's been a brick to me ever since I came here. He's the only one of the big fellows in Congress that's taken any notice of me, an' I guess I appreciate it. An' the girls, they think you're just perfect."

"I'm only sorry I couldn't do more for you, Mr. Burrell," said Helen, with a smile.

There were general good-nights,

and Mrs. Burrell led the way toward the staircase, the others following, with the exception of Carrie Cora.

"Oh, Mrs. Briggs!" the girl exclaimed, impulsively, "I have something to tell you. But I—I mustn't stay a minute."

"What is it, dear?"

"He's come to Washington," Carrie Cora whispered. "He got here this morning."

"Why didn't you bring him to-night?"

"I wanted to," Carrie Cora replied, breathlessly. "I wanted him to meet you. I've told him so much about you, and what a help you've been to me. But I was afraid of ma. She was furious when he came to the hotel. He sent his card up just as bold, and ma didn't want to let me go down to see him. But I did. And oh, he's—he's just as handsome as ever!"

She turned her face away, to hide the tears in her eyes.

"My poor girl," said Helen, taking her hand.

"And he wanted me to go right out, just as I was, and get married. He said he'd call a carriage."

"I'm glad you didn't, dear."

"I think I would have gone—only I just had my every-day dress on, and I looked horrid! It seemed so foolish to go like that. And now I'm sorry I didn't. I never shall have the courage again."

"You're sorry?"

"Yes, because ma says that I'm not to see him any more. She made an awful fuss. That's what I wanted to speak to you about. Won't you please talk to ma? He's just as good as he can be, and even if he isn't very successful he earns enough for two. That's all I care about."

"But what can I say to your mother, dear? I don't even know him."

Carrie Cora looked down and began to rub the carpet with her foot. "Well, ma thinks everything of you, and if you'd just—just ask her to let him come to see me, that would be something. I'm sure she'll like him when she understands him better.

Pa likes him, but pa is afraid to oppose ma in anything, except when he gets roused."

Helen patted the girl's hand affectionately. "Well, dear, I'll go to see your mother to-morrow. I'll take her out for a drive. Then we can have a good talk together."

Carrie Cora impulsively threw her arms around Helen's neck. "Oh, Mrs. Briggs!" she cried. Then she drew back as if ashamed. "It's silly of me to act like this, isn't it, before all these people? But I must go now. They'll wonder what has happened to me. Good-night, dear Mrs. Briggs."

During Helen's talk with the girl Franklin West had appeared at the door of the library with M. de Lange, whom he seemed to know. As soon as the girl disappeared the two men walked toward Helen.

The Frenchman drew his heels together and made another of his low bows, which West observed with the amused tolerance of the American.

"I have been waiting to say good-night, madame. Your reception, it is most beautiful! The flowers, the pretty women! Ah, you Americans, you are a wonderful nation!"

"Well, we do things in pretty good style over here, that's a fact," West remarked, coolly.

M. de Lange looked bewildered. Then his face shone.

"Style? Ah, yes. It is—it is *superbe*. Such beautiful *toilettes*, so *chic*! And your women—they are so many—so——"

West threw back his head. "Yes, we certainly have a great many," he said, with a laugh.

The bewildered look returned to the Frenchman's face. "So many—so beautiful, I mean, so *chic*. And so many kinds! So different! Your Washington—it is a marvel."

Helen extended her hand.

"You are very good to say so. But I'm sorry you're leaving."

"*Au revoir*, madame." He glanced at West and bowed once more. "Monsieur!"

West looked relieved. "Perhaps now we can have a moment together,"

he said to Helen. "I have something to say to you. Will you come into the library?"

Helen hesitated. "But only for a moment," she said. When she had entered the room and taken a seat she asked him, in a matter-of-fact tone: "What is it?"

"A few moments ago you told me that you weren't able to make me out," West said, slowly.

Helen smiled good-humoredly. "Not quite that, I think. I hadn't tried *very* hard."

"You said you didn't understand what kind of man I really was."

Helen moved uneasily. "I really think I ought to go back. You must tell me these things some other time."

"Wait a minute. I may not have another chance to see you alone to-night. There is something I must say to you now."

Helen drew a long breath and turned slightly pale.

"I must tell you what it means to me to be near you."

Helen kept her eyes turned from him. "I don't understand you," she said, quietly.

West let his hand rest on her arm. "You don't understand?"

Helen looked him in the face. "No," she replied, coldly.

"Do you mean that you haven't understood all along how I felt toward you?" For a moment they faced each other in silence. "Why don't you answer me?"

"Please take your hand off my arm," said Helen.

"Why don't you answer?" West insisted.

Helen drew her arm away.

"Because, as I have told you before, there are some things that are better not said."

"Then you've known?"

"Yes, I've known." Helen did not flinch. "I've suspected."

"Why have you allowed me to come here, then?"

"Because," Helen replied, slowly, as if measuring her words, "I thought you would never dare to speak to me

as you've just done. And if you go on I shall have to call my husband. Before that becomes necessary I must ask you to leave here."

West assumed an attitude of contemptuous indifference. "Thank you, but I prefer to stay."

"You will not go?"

West folded his arms. "No."

Helen turned toward the electric bell.

"Don't touch that bell," said West, authoritatively.

She faced him as if fascinated. He could hear her breathe. "Now, you won't call the servants, and you won't tell your husband anything about this conversation. In the first place, your servants are really my servants."

Helen shrank back. "Oh!" she said.

"They are paid with my money," West went on, with a grim smile. "So I think I may call them mine."

"How contemptible of you!"

West lifted his shoulders. "Well, perhaps I am contemptible. It all depends on the point of view, I suppose. Now, you don't consider your husband contemptible, and yet he's worse than I am. I don't pretend to be any better than I am."

"I'll let you say these things to his face," Helen replied, starting to leave the room.

West stood between her and the door. "If you make a scene here, madam, you'll simply disgrace yourself and you'll ruin your husband. Can't you see what you're doing? Your husband has been in my pay ever since he came to Washington. But for me, do you suppose you could live in all this luxury? Why, this very ball to-night has cost more than half his salary. All those stories that they tell about him are true, do you understand?—only they're not half as bad as the stories I could tell. If the whole truth were known he'd be held up before all the country as a thief and a hypocrite. But for me he'd be a petty country lawyer in the backwoods that you came from. I gave him his chance; I've made him what he is. I've favored him more than anyone

else in his position since he came here, for your sake, because I loved you. He knew that, and he's been playing on the knowledge." He released her hands. "I hope you're satisfied now."

Helen sank weakly into a chair.

"Shall I ring for your husband, Mrs. Briggs?" West asked.

Douglas Briggs, who had just learned from Fanny that his wife was in the library, happened to be outside, in the hall. He overheard West's last remark.

"Ring for me!" he repeated, as he entered the room. "What's the matter?"

"Mrs. Briggs is feeling a little faint, I think," said West. "So I suggested that we send for you."

"Are you ill, Helen?" Briggs asked, anxiously.

"No. It's—it's nothing. If you will take me out on the balcony I shall feel better." She passed her hand over her forehead. "It's so close here."

Briggs passed his arm around his wife's waist and led her gently toward the door. As he left the room he turned. "Make yourself at home, West," he said.

When they reached the balcony Helen let her hand rest on the rail and drew a long breath. "It was so dreadfully hot in there!" she said, with a twinge of conscience at the covert deceit. But she felt she must keep the cause of her agitation from her husband; at any rate, until she had time to think and to decide what to do. If she were to speak now of the insult she had received, she felt sure that nothing would keep Douglas from attacking West and driving him from the house.

"We must send you back to Waverly, dear, and get some more color into those cheeks of yours." Briggs took his wife's hand. "Why, you're trembling!" he said.

"Oh, it's nothing, dear, nothing. I shall feel perfectly well in a minute." She let him draw her close to him, and they stood together in silence. "We must go back, Douglas. Some

of the people must be looking for us. I'm all right now."

"If you feel faint again let me know, or go out of that hot drawing-room," he said. "I'll keep an eye on you, anyway."

IX

It was nearly three o'clock before the last guest left. The flowers in the deserted rooms had drooped and faded; even the lights seemed to have dimmed. The house wore an air of melancholy. Fanny and Guy came from the dining-room, where they had eaten a second supper.

"I wonder where auntie and uncle are?" she said. "Doesn't it seem ghostly?" She yawned. "Ugh! I guess they're in the library."

Helen Briggs was seated in one of the big easy chairs, her head thrown back and her eyes closed. Her husband sat on one arm, looking down at her.

"Flirting, as usual!" Fanny cried. "Well, wasn't it grand?"

"Better go to bed," said Douglas, sleepily.

Helen half-opened her eyes. "I'm glad you had a good time, dear."

"Everybody seemed pleased," said Guy, with a glance at Douglas. He liked to look at things from the professional point of view.

"Fanny, please go to bed," Helen insisted.

"All right," said Fanny, meekly. She kissed Helen, then she kissed her uncle. She approached Guy on tip-toe and held her hand high in the air. "Good-night, sir," she said, softly.

Ten minutes later the house was in darkness, save for a light in the library, where Douglas Briggs sat writing. After an evening of excitement he never could rest, and he found that some quiet work soothed his nerves. He was one of those men who seemed to thrive with very little rest; he had often worked all night, not even lying down, without showing a trace of the vigil in his face the next day.

Helen had gone to her room, but

not to sleep. She changed her ball dress for a loose gown, and letting her hair fall over her shoulders, she sat for a long time thinking. Should she tell Douglas? A disclosure might lead to serious consequences. It would not only break the business relations between Douglas and West, but it would also involve husband and wife in a little personal quarrel. For the present she resolved to keep her secret. As for the charge West had made against Douglas, that was merely another of the calumnies circulated about him since he had begun to be successful in Washington. Why was it that one man could not prosper without exciting the hatred and the envy of so many other men? Douglas, she felt sure, had never done anything to injure anyone. His success had been won by his own abilities and industry. He had worked harder than any other man in Washington. She knew that herself, and she had often heard it remarked by others. She recalled all the unselfish work he had done in Congress, the bills he had toiled for with no purpose beyond that of securing fair legislation. Everything he undertook seemed to succeed. Helen had never thought much about the way in which he had made his money. It had come to him along with his successes. She knew that he had lately had good fortune in some land speculations near Washington; but that was merely another evidence of his shrewdness, and was perfectly legitimate. There were plenty of Congressmen in Washington who remained poor simply because they had not her husband's business resources and enterprise. When finally she went to bed, however, she had a vague sense of discomfort that could not be attributed to the agitation caused by her interview with Franklin West. She did not like even the thought of questioning her husband about his ways of making money. She had never doubted him before. Why should she doubt him now?

The next day Helen rose at noon with a splitting headache. She rang the bell, and when the maid appeared,

bearing breakfast on a tray, Fanny came with her. Fanny's cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright.

"What do you suppose I've been doing? I've been taking breakfast down at the hotel with dad. Then I made him go out with me and buy me a lot of things. So I've had a profitable morning. Half a dozen lace handkerchiefs, a silk scarf and a *beautiful* tailor-made coat. It's going to be a dream. I went to the place you like so much—Broadhurst's. I wish you could have heard what was said about my figure. And when I got back everybody was asleep except Uncle Doug. I shouldn't wonder if he sat up all night, though he declared he didn't. Here, I'll fix that tray, Mary. You go down. Let me pour the tea, auntie; there are two black lines around your eyes. They make you look so interesting! I guess you're kind of tired."

"Yes, I am," Helen acknowledged.

"All right, drink this and you'll feel better. Why don't you stay in bed?"

"I mustn't. I promised that I'd take Mrs. Burrell for a drive this afternoon. I told one of the girls."

"More missionary work, I suppose. Auntie, if you don't stop driving round with old frumps like that, I won't recognize you on the street. Well, I guess I'll go for a bicycle ride with Guy. He's been promising to take me out to Georgetown for a long time. Don't you think it would be proper?"

"Can't you get someone to go with you?" Helen asked, sipping her tea and wondering why she could not shake off, even for a moment, the thought of Franklin West's remarks of the night before.

"I suppose I could get Mrs. Simpson. She's always glad to have someone to ride with her."

"Do that, then," said Helen.

Fanny sighed. "What an awful thing to have to be so proper in this world!"

When Helen had dressed she went up to the nursery, where she found Dorothy and Jack eating dinner.

They seemed to be always eating. They jumped from their seats and clung around her. They wore their heavy street clothes and their thick boots.

"I was going to take them out before dinner," Miss Munroe explained, "but it seemed damp. So I thought I'd wait till afternoon."

"Are you going out, mamma?" Jack asked, clutching at Helen's dress.

"Yes, by-and-by," Helen replied, patiently.

Dorothy immediately became plaintive. "Oh, can't we go with you?"

"Not to-day, dear. I'm going to take Mrs. Burrell for a drive."

"Oh, shoot Mrs. Burrell!" Dorothy cried.

"Dorothy!" said Miss Munroe, reproachfully. Miss Munroe often wondered where the children learned their naughty words. They seemed to absorb them from the air.

"Papa came up before he went out," said Jack. "He says he's going to buy me a sword."

"Papa is always buying things for Jack!" Dorothy, with a little encouragement, would soon have burst into tears. Helen saw that the child was nervous from her morning in the house.

"Take them out as soon as they have finished eating," she said to Miss Munroe.

As Helen descended the stairs she met Fanny and Guy just about to start out on their wheels. "I've telephoned Mrs. Simpson, and she's going. She wants us to lunch with her. You don't mind, do you, dear?" Fanny asked, solicitously. "If you do, I'll stay."

Helen shook her head. "No, your uncle won't be here, and I'll lunch late. So go and have a good time."

On the table of the library Helen found a pile of New York and Washington morning papers. She glanced at them to see what they had to say about the ball. Some of the New York papers made brief reference to it; others published long despatches. The Washington papers gave con-

siderable space to it. Just as she was turning a page of the *New York Chronicle*, Helen caught her husband's name in one of the editorial columns. She turned back and read the paragraph:

Last night in Washington Congressman Douglas Briggs gave a ball to celebrate the opening of his new house. It is said that the house alone cost twenty-five thousand dollars. It is furnished in a style that only a rich man could afford. Six years ago Congressman Briggs went to Washington without a dollar, to devote himself to political affairs, and practically abandoned his growing law practice. He has apparently found politics profitable. Funny world!

Helen read the paragraph rapidly; afterward she read it more slowly. Then she placed the paper carefully on the top of the pile. She rose and walked to the window. She heard Miss Munroe come down stairs with the children. She had an impulse to go out into the hall and bid them good-bye, but she checked it; she wished to speak to no one for a few moments.

She went back to the table and read the paragraph again. Then she placed the paper in the centre of the pile. She would not allow herself to think why she did it. She heard a servant pass through the hall, and she called that she would have luncheon served in an hour. During the interval she busied herself feverishly, but she could not keep from thinking about that paragraph. Of course, Douglas would see it. Perhaps he had seen it already. She remembered now that Guy usually clipped from the papers all references to Douglas. He had left the papers on the table to look them over on his return with Fanny. The clippings he pasted in the big black scrapbooks that Douglas kept on one of the lower shelves, under his law books. She was tempted to look through them now to see if they contained any references like that one she had just read. But she felt ashamed.

After luncheon Helen drove to the Shoreham, where the Burrells had

lived since coming to Washington. Carrie Cora was the first to receive her. "I've had the hardest work keeping ma at home," she said. "I didn't want to let her know I knew you were coming. That would have spoiled everything. It's just lovely of you to come! Gladys and Emeline have gone to the Philharmonic concert, and pa's up to the House."

Mrs. Burrell presently made a vociferous entrance. She was one of those women who do everything noisily. "Well, if this isn't good of you, to come just after that party of yours! I should think you'd be all beat out."

"I've come to take you for a drive," Helen explained.

Mrs. Burrell slapped her dress with both hands. It was a shimmering brown silk of fashionable cut, that looked as if it did not belong to her.

"I don't believe I look fit," she said.

"Oh, yes, you do, ma," Carrie Cora urged. "Please go."

"We'll go out into the country somewhere," said Helen.

"So it don't make any difference what you wear," Carrie Cora chimed in.

Mrs. Burrell looked relieved. "I just hate to keep changing. It seems to me we do nothing here in Washington but dress, dress. I get so sick of it! That's the worst of living in these hotels. You never feel at home."

Helen hesitated to broach the subject of Carrie Cora's love affair. A remark she made soon after they entered the carriage unexpectedly relieved her of the necessity.

"I hope Carrie Cora doesn't mind being left alone in the apartment," she said.

"Oh, Lor', no," Mrs. Burrell replied. "I've never seen anyone like her. She just loves to be alone. She's always been queer about that, and lately she's been queerer than ever. She doesn't seem to take an interest in anything. Now, last night, she'd never have gone with us but for you. She hates parties; but she thinks

everything of you." Mrs. Burrell drew nearer Helen. "She's in love," she whispered.

Helen smiled. "There isn't any great harm in that."

"There wouldn't be," Mrs. Burrell agreed, "if the young man belonged to her station in life. But he don't. He hasn't a cent to his name."

"I'm sorry to hear that. But isn't there anything else against him?—besides his being poor, I mean."

"Oh, I guess he's *good* enough," Mrs. Burrell acknowledged, grudgingly. "I never heard anything against him. His name is Rufus James," she added, as if this fact in some way explained his condition. "He's here in Washington now." Her lips tightened as she looked at Helen with an expression that said: "Think of that!"

As Helen said nothing, Mrs. Burrell went on: "Of course, he came just because she was here."

"He must be very fond of her," Helen ventured to remark. "But I don't wonder; Carrie Cora is a very fine girl."

"She *is* a fine girl. I declare to goodness I wish she wouldn't keep her light under a bushel. She does make me so mad! She could have gone to the best teachers down to Boston or anywhere. Father even offered to send her to Europe. She said she'd rather stay at home and do housework. She's a splendid housekeeper. I sometimes think that's what Rufus James wants to marry her for."

"Well, that's a great compliment to Carrie Cora," Helen laughed. "It seems to me a pretty good reason for marrying."

"And have her go off and live in some tumble-down place in Auburn!" Mrs. Burrell exclaimed, in horror.

"But perhaps that's the only way she could be happy," Helen insisted, gently. "Carrie Cora's naturally domestic; I can see that."

Mrs. Burrell sighed. "And I always wanted to make something of her! I'm sure her father's spent money enough."

"But if she makes a good wife and

mother—that will be enough, won't it? Besides, is Rufus James so very poor?"

"I don't believe he makes more than a thousand dollars a year."

"That's just what Douglas was earning when we became engaged," said Helen.

"What?" Mrs. Burrell looked startled. "Well, I declare!" she said.

"Douglas was teaching school then at Waverly, where we lived. They paid him only six hundred a year; and he made the rest by writing for the newspapers. At the same time he studied law."

"Well, he *was* smart. I don't wonder he's so successful."

"We had to wait three years before we could marry. That seemed a long time."

Mrs. Burrell sighed. "It must have been hard."

Helen at once pressed the point. "How long has Carrie Cora been waiting?" she asked.

"Oh, they're not *engaged*," Mrs. Burrell replied, reproachfully, as if this fact threw Carrie Cora's case out of the discussion.

"But how long have they been fond of each other?"

"Well, as soon as I found it out I did my best to stop it," said Mrs. Burrell, as if flaunting a generous act. "I just told him he wasn't to come to the house any more. That was more'n two years ago."

"So they haven't seen anything of each other since?"

"Oh, yes, they have. Indeed they have. That girl's just as obstinate. She's her father all over. I've said that to my husband a thousand times since this trouble came to us. It's spoiled our Winter here. The girl's a damper on everything. I kind of thought when she came down here she'd get over it. But, as I was saying, she used to meet him 'round places in Auburn, mostly at Emily Farnsworth's. Emily always was a great friend of Carrie Cora's. I used to like Emily real well. Now we don't speak." Mrs. Burrell pressed her

lips together again, and tears stood in her eyes.

"Those things are always unfortunate," said Helen, sympathetically.

Mrs. Burrell clutched her by the arm. "There he is now!" she said, "over there. See that slim young man with the derby hat?"

"Who?" Helen asked, mystified.

"Why, Rufus James himself."

The young man saw that he was observed, and looked at the two women with surprise in his face. Then his eyes lighted and he flushed and turned his head quickly away.

"He recognized me," Mrs. Burrell exclaimed. "You could see that plain enough. And he never had the politeness to lift his hat."

"Can you blame him?" Helen asked.

It was Mrs. Burrell who flushed now.

"He's good-looking, isn't he?" Helen went on. She was secretly pleased by the young man's show of spirit.

Mrs. Burrell didn't speak for several minutes. Helen waited. "Oh, I know you think I'm as hard as a rock," she blurted out at last. "Just because——"

"Oh, no," Helen interposed, quickly.

Mrs. Burrell grew humble. "Do you think I ought to have let him come?" she asked. "To the house, I mean?"

"It's always a pity when those things have to go on outside the house."

"So Mr. Dyer said. He's our minister. He talked to me just as you've been talking. But I suppose I'm obstinate myself. Still, I've always tried to do right by that girl."

"I'm sure you have."

They fell into silence again. They had reached the country, and soft breezes blew across their faces, bearing the scent of apple blossoms.

"You ain't said much," Mrs. Burrell began, "but I can just *feel* what you think. You think I ain't done right. Oh, don't! I know just how you feel. You think I've been throw-

ing that girl in temptation's way. But I guess I know Carrie Cora better'n anyone else. And Rufus James is an honorable young man. He's always had a good reputation in Auburn. Oh, dear!"

The tears ran down her withered cheeks. "I'd like to go home," she said to Helen. "I don't feel a bit well. Perhaps my husband will be home. I want to have a talk with him." Helen spoke to the driver and they turned back toward the city. "I'm an awful fool," Mrs. Burrell went on; "and don't you go and blame yourself for anything I've said or done. I've known all along that I wasn't doing right, but it was just that pride of mine kept me from acknowledging it." She dried her eyes and sank back in the seat. Suddenly she sat bolt upright. "D'you suppose Rufus James would come to dinner to-night if I asked him?" she said.

X

HELEN BRIGGS felt uncomfortable on leaving Mrs. Burrell. It was true that she had not introduced the subject of Carrie Cora's love affair, but her conscience troubled her, nevertheless. She did not like interfering in other people's business. However, victory had probably been won for the girl, unless something should change her mother's mind. A resentful word, a disagreeable look on Carrie Cora's part, might shatter the possibility of a lifetime of happiness. On the other hand, Helen argued, Mrs. Burrell might have been justified in opposing her daughter. In spite of her own experience, Helen had grown sceptical with regard to marriage. Many marriages among her friends had begun with every promise of happiness and had been either disappointments or complete failures. So often, she had observed, love seemed to be only a form of egoism, that soon expressed itself in selfishness or resentment or bitterness.

On reaching home Helen found the house deserted save by the servants.

On the way she had observed Miss Munroe with the children in the Park. She went into the library to get something to read, and her eye fell on the black scrapbooks. Without realizing that she had for hours been resisting the temptation to examine them, she quickly drew out one from the shelf and placed it on her husband's desk. It happened to be the latest, and it was only half-filled with newspaper clippings. With a nervous impulse she placed it back on the shelf and took the volume at the opposite end of the row. On the fly-leaf she read, in her husband's handwriting: "My first speeches in Congress." Most of these had been clipped from the Congressional reports, and many of them she had read. She turned the pages quickly, stopping here and there to read a personal paragraph of praise or criticism. One contained this statement:

It is a satisfaction to see that in Douglas Briggs New York has at last sent a man to Congress who gives promise of taking a conspicuous position before the country. Briggs is impulsive, even hot-headed, and consequently injudicious, and his faults would be serious in a man of greater age and experience. But he has decided force of character, invincible determination, remarkable insight into public affairs and an inexhaustible capacity for work. He is sure to cut a great figure if his party stands by him. His danger lies in the chance of his becoming too big a man to be held in check by his party. He has already overridden several party measures and taken leadership in pushing reforms that are distinctly opposed to the party's policy.

Helen had an impulse to kiss the page on which these words were printed. But she checked it and turned the leaves more quickly, letting her eye run down each column. For more than an hour she pored over the volumes. When she had glanced over five of these she noticed a change in the tone of the comments. They began to be sarcastic; they pointed out several inconsistencies in her husband's course. One paper published in parallel columns contradictory quotations from his

speeches. Then followed open charges of corruption against him in connection with a railroad bill then under consideration in Congress. As she read, Helen grew faint. How did it happen that she had neither seen nor heard of this article? Why hadn't Douglas spoken of it to her? Why had he not come out with a public denial of the charge, or sued the paper for libel? Then she said to herself that she was foolish to ask these questions. Attacks of this kind are made every day on public men; the higher their position the more bitter the enemies made.

She heard a click at the front door, and she started. It was probably Douglas returning early from the House. She was tempted to put the book quickly back in its place; but she sat without moving, waiting for him to come in. He walked up the stairs, however. She rose with a sigh of relief and, closing the book, left it on the table.

Douglas Briggs stopped on the upper landing and called, "Helen!" Then he looked down. "Oh, there you are," he said. He came down quickly. "Rested?" he said, taking her hand and holding it to his cheek.

"Yes, dear." Then she suddenly put both her hands on his head and kissed him twice. "I'm glad you came back early," she said. "Everybody's out, and I've been feeling lonely."

She returned to the library, and he followed. "I've been looking over your scrapbooks," she said.

"Couldn't you find anything more interesting?" He dropped into a seat near the table and ran his fingers through his hair. "We've been having a great fight to-day. Aspinwall's new tariff schedule. If I'd known I was going to make a speech I'd have asked you to come. Have you seen the notices of our ball last night in the papers?"

Helen nodded.

"The *Star* gave us a great send-off. They treated me as if I were a millionaire." Douglas Briggs sighed. "I wish I were."

"That reminds me, Douglas," said Helen; "I want to ask you something." She was astonished at her own boldness. She felt as if she were speaking at the bidding of someone else.

Briggs looked up. "Well?" Helen did not answer at once, and he added: "What is it?"

"Since last night," she began, slowly, seeming to hear her voice in another part of the room, "I've been wondering if we weren't living very extravagantly."

He looked at her in surprise. Then the expression in his face softened. "I shouldn't worry about that, dear, if I were you. There's no need of it."

"Douglas!" she said, softly.

"Eh?"

"How much do you make in a year?"

Briggs smiled and frowned at the same moment. "What?" he said, with astonishment, "how much do I make?"

"Yes. What's your income? What was it last year? Please tell me; I have a reason for asking."

Briggs looked vaguely around the room. "'Pon my word, I don't believe I know myself."

"Can't you estimate?"

"I suppose I could," Briggs replied, with a note of irritation in his voice. "But what do you want to know for?"

"I think I ought to know."

"Don't you have everything you want?" he asked, inconsequently.

"Yes."

"Have I stinted you in anything?"

"No, Douglas, never. You've been perfect. No woman ever had a more generous husband."

Briggs thrust his hands into his pockets and burlesqued an attitude of extreme self-satisfaction. "There! Then there's nothing more to be said, since I'm such a paragon."

"But I want to know, really," Helen insisted.

Briggs turned quickly. "I told you I didn't know myself."

"But I'm serious about this," Helen

went on. "Now, your salary is five thousand, isn't it?"

"M'm—h'm!"

"And the property Aunt Lena left me—how much does that bring in?"

Briggs lifted his shoulders. "Last year it brought in only two thousand. We might have got more out of it——"

"Please don't reproach me about that. You know how much I want to keep it safe for the children!"

"Well, if that isn't just like a woman!" Briggs returned, laughing. "When she might have more for the children!"

"Or nothing at all," Helen remarked, quietly.

Briggs drew his hands from his pockets and sat erect. "Helen," he said, leaning toward his wife, "if you weren't a woman you'd be a parson, like your father and your two brothers. It's in your blood."

Helen ignored the remark. "That makes seven thousand, doesn't it?"

"But I never touch *that* money. I add it to the principal."

"So we have only five thousand to live on!" Helen exclaimed, in a startled voice.

Her husband threw his head back and smiled. "No, no! Now you talk as if you were a millionaire's daughter. How much did your father live on, I'd like to know?"

"Eighteen hundred a year."

"Well, I dare say he was just as happy on that as we are on——"

"On what?"

"On what we spend."

"The ball we gave last night must have cost at least eighteen hundred," Helen persisted.

"Well, I guess we're good for it," Briggs replied, complacently.

Helen lost control of herself. "That's what I can't understand," she cried, excitedly. "How are we good for it?"

Douglas Briggs rose and walked slowly toward his wife. He laid his hand gently on her shoulder. "My dear child, that's a nice way to speak to your husband!"

"Please don't call me your dear child again. Douglas. Now, I have a

reason for asking these questions, and I want you to give me direct answers."

Briggs let his hand drop. Helen stood and walked to the edge of the desk.

"I think you must be ill, dear," he said.

She tried to keep the tears from her voice. "I shall be, unless you tell me the truth."

Douglas Briggs looked at her for a long time. She kept her eyes turned from him. "Do you mean that you want to know whether I am an honest man or not?" he asked, in a low voice.

"I have never questioned your honesty, Douglas."

He hesitated. "I will tell you the truth," he said, as if he had just passed through a struggle. "Last year I must have spent nearly thirty thousand dollars. It was all I had. At the end of the year I was five thousand dollars in debt. That has since been paid."

"How did you make that money?"

Briggs looked down at the table. His eyes wandered over his papers and over the black scrapbook. "That's a cruel question for a wife to ask her husband," he said at last.

"Not when she knows he will be able to answer it," Helen said, firmly.

"Well, I—I made it mostly through my law practice."

Helen began to breathe quickly. "But I heard you say the other day that since you came to Washington you had been forced to give up your practice."

"So I have—very largely, almost wholly, in fact," he replied, growing impatient again. "But there are some interests that I have to look out for here."

"Such as what?"

"Well, there's the—there are some railroad interests."

"Some railroad interests!" Helen repeated, blankly.

"Yes."

"The railroad that Mr. West is concerned in, do you mean?"

"Why, yes; you know that perfectly well. I've been associated with that

railroad for years, in one way or another."

"That's the road that receives so much favor from the Government, isn't it?"

"Oh, that's mere gossip. There's no such thing."

Helen looked straight into his face. Her figure had become rigid. "What do you do for the railroad, Douglas?"

His eyes flashed; his nostrils turned white. "You're going too far, Helen," he cried.

She did not stir. "I have a right to ask these questions. Oh, I know you consider that I can't understand these things. You acknowledge that you receive thousands of dollars a year from that railroad—five times as much as your salary."

"I made no such acknowledgment," he replied, doggedly.

"But it's true; you know it's true, Douglas. You can't deny it."

"I won't take the trouble to deny it, since you evidently want to believe it."

"And you know you don't give the road an hour a day of your time."

His lips curled. "No. My dear girl, lawyers aren't paid by the hour, like your seamstresses."

"And the railroad's regular attorney is Mr. West," Helen went on. "You know that."

"Well, West does all the dirty work," he said, with a hoarse laugh.

"And what do you do, Douglas?" She hesitated. "Answer me, Douglas—what do you do?"

"Wait a minute," he said, in a low voice. He raised his hand. "I warn you that you are interfering with matters that don't concern you, that you wouldn't even understand. You are doing it at your peril."

"What do you do for that company?" she repeated.

He extended both hands in a gesture of deprecation. "I simply look after its interests in the House. There's the truth, now. It's perfectly legitimate. There are plenty of men who do the same thing for other corporations—men in big positions."

Her eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Douglas!" she said.

XI

On the morning after the reception Franklin West sat at his desk in his office in the Belmore building. His head was bowed over a mass of type-written sheets. He paid little attention to them, however. He found it hard to work this morning. He was thinking, with considerable disgust, that he had made himself ridiculous the night before. He had, moreover, made a misstep that might lead to serious consequences.

His indiscretion was due, of course, to the champagne punch he had drunk. He had just come from a dinner given in honor of a politician whose goodwill he wished to secure, and there he had drunk as much as he could stand without losing his head. Then he had foolishly allowed himself to go to Briggs's party, though he might have foreseen the result.

Yes, he had certainly been a great ass. He had spoken to Mrs. Briggs in a way he would never have thought of speaking if he had been in his senses. However, now that the mischief was done, he must consider how to meet the consequences. What would the consequences be? Would she tell her husband? The answer to that question depended wholly on whether she believed the charge he had made against her husband's integrity. West knew well enough that Mrs. Briggs had an absolute belief in her husband, and this knowledge had often caused him a contemptuous bitterness. Why should a man like Briggs be allowed to deceive such a woman as that? If Mrs. Briggs still kept her faith in her husband, there was no reason why she should not reveal the episode of the previous night—none except the woman's natural fear of creating a scandal. This motive might be strong enough to keep her silent. But, of course, he could never enter her house again. He might, it is true—and the thought

gave him a momentary relief—he might write her an apology, and explain his behavior on the plea of his condition. But that would be too humiliating, and it would give Briggs a hold on him that would be decidedly disagreeable, and might lead to disastrous consequences. However, this expedient might be tried as a final resort. It was, of course, possible that Mrs. Briggs would believe what he had said, or would make an investigation that would bring the truth home to her. Here was an interesting problem. Once convinced that her husband was a hypocrite, that he had made his money by means that she considered dishonest, would she still respect and love him?

West took a satisfaction in thinking that if he had made himself ridiculous, he might have at least ruined the happiness of the woman who had repulsed him, and of the man for whom he had a covert hatred, caused partly by jealousy, partly by an instinctive consciousness of Briggs's dislike, and partly by that natural aversion which all men have for those who are associated with them in dealings that degrade them in their own esteem.

The green door leading into the adjoining room opened, and the office boy entered. "There's a lady wishes to see you, sir," he said.

Franklin West looked up. "Who is she?"

"She told me just to say a lady wanted to see you."

"All right." West rose slowly and left the room. A moment later he was greeting Miss Beatrice Wing.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said, with his large smile.

Miss Wing was radiant in a new Spring frock, a tight-fitting blue serge suit, with a large hat, trimmed with blue flowers, resting jauntily on her auburn hair.

"I don't often come out so early," she replied, "especially after such late hours." She looked as if she had had the night's rest of a child.

"Come into my office, won't you?" West led the way, and Miss Wing followed, suggesting by her walk the

steps of a ballet dancer. As she passed the clerks looked up and smiled at one another. When she had seated herself she looked at West for a moment without speaking, her face bright with good humor.

"I've come on a funny errand," she said at last, rubbing her left arm with her gloved hand.

"That's interesting," said West, cheerfully.

"I want you to do something for me."

The smile disappeared from his face, but soon returned. West rarely suffered more than a momentary eclipse. At this moment, however, his instinct warned him of danger.

"I shall be only too glad," he began; but Miss Wing cut him short.

"I want," she said, waving one hand with the effect of making a joke, "I want to place my services at your feet."

West continued to smile. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I want you to give me something to do, to give me a share in your enterprises. I know I can be useful to you."

"But what about your own work—your newspaper work?"

Miss Wing snapped her gloved fingers. "What does that amount to? Why, it hardly pays for my frocks. And to tell the truth," she went on, her manner growing more familiar, "I'm not at all clever at it. My editor has to rewrite nearly everything I send him. By nature I'm a business woman. Society reporting bores me. I like larger interests. That's what I came to Washington for."

West showed that he was growing interested by slightly closing his left eye. This gave him a curiously sinister expression, which Miss Wing observed. "You want to become a lobbyist—is that the idea?" he asked.

Miss Wing sank back in her chair. "To get a little power if I could, and to use it for my own advantage. Now, there's frankness for you. But I'm only a beginner. I'm just getting my start."

West cleared his throat. "Since

you're so frank, Miss Wing," he said, pleasantly, "perhaps you'll tell me just what you want."

On being confronted with this question Miss Wing flushed. "I think you know perfectly well what I want. I've told you that I want you to let me into your schemes."

West shrugged his shoulders; his face became almost sad. "I haven't any schemes of that sort," he said, softly.

Miss Wing laughed outright. "You haven't any interest in railroad legislation?" she asked, with a lift of the eyebrows.

"It is true that I'm employed by a railroad. But as you aren't a lawyer, I don't see how you could help me."

Miss Wing looked at him for a long time, her smile hardening. "I'm surprised that you should treat me like this." Then her face softened. "I'm a little hurt, too."

"You wanted me to be frank," West replied, gently.

Miss Wing hesitated. When she spoke it was with a complete change of tone. "There's really no use beating about the bush any longer. Everybody in Washington knows what you do for that railroad. Everybody knows that last year you spent more than a hundred thousand dollars for it—right here in this city. And everybody knows that Congressman Briggs is your tool. He is helping you push the bill through the House. But everybody doesn't know one other fact that I know." She held her head high and looked at West defiantly. She flushed, and her hat trembled.

"What may that be?" he asked, quietly.

She sank back in her seat and smiled. "If I were to publish an article," she went on, slowly, "that you had not only bribed Congressman Briggs, but had taken advantage of your hold on him to make love to his wife, that would make a dreadful scandal, wouldn't it?"

West did not stir. He seemed even to control his breath. "I don't know what you are talking about," he said, in a low voice.

She smiled and watched him. She admired a man who could take things so. "I've suspected for a long time," she explained, lightly, "and when I saw you drinking all that punch last night, I knew you were losing your head. Wasn't it strong? I just sipped it. That was enough. Oh, you were amusing! You entertained me all the evening."

He looked at her without change of expression. He was thinking how pleasant it would be to take her by the throat and choke out her silvery laugh. "You followed me about, then?" he asked.

Miss Wing looked injured. "Oh, dear, no—nothing so vulgar. But I saw it all by the merest chance. I happened to be standing near the library door at just the right angle. I saw you threaten Mrs. Briggs. There was no need of hearing what you said. It was all as plain as daylight. Now, what do you propose to do about it?"

West roused himself. "Do you realize," he said, "that if you were to start a story of that sort no one in Washington would believe you?"

Miss Wing looked hurt. "Then you want me to publish the article?" she said, reproachfully. "How unkind of you!"

"Do as you please about that. It won't be the first libel that has been printed about me."

"Perhaps you would prefer that I should inform Mr. Briggs of what I saw last night," she said. "That would be less public, wouldn't it?"

"Tell him," West replied, with a yawn, "and you'll get turned out of the house for your trouble. Besides, Mrs. Briggs would deny the story. Then where would you be? No, my dear lady, you've made a false start. You'll have to try your game on a younger hand. I've been in Washington too long to be afraid of a woman like you." The smile had completely faded from his face. He looked like a different man. "Only, if I were you," he went on, "I wouldn't make the mistake of bothering Congressman Briggs. That

might be disastrous to your career here."

Miss Wing rose from her seat. "Thanks for your advice; it's so disinterested," she said, with a smile. "But I shall give you a few days to think the matter over. The article will keep. In case you should wish to write me——"

"I know the address," West interrupted. "Going?" Miss Wing stood at the green door. The toss of her head conveyed anger, resentment and disappointment. "If I were you I'd stick to newspaper work," West called after her. "It pays best in the end."

XII

A WEEK later the mild Spring weather changed to heat that suggested Midsummer. The Potomac flats sent up odors that made people talk about malaria and the importance of getting out of town. Congress gave no sign of adjourning, however. The House was choked with business; important bills were under consideration and equally important bills lay waiting to be brought up. It looked now as if the session might last till July.

One hot afternoon, as Douglas Briggs was walking slowly home, he met Miss Munroe and her little charges. Dorothy and Jack were walking listlessly, their faces pale, their eyes tired. On meeting him the children showed less than usual enthusiasm.

"They ought to be out of town," said Briggs.

Miss Munroe nodded. "Jack doesn't seem himself at all," she said, "since this heat began. And Dorothy has lost all her spirits."

That night at dinner Helen sat alone with her husband. Guy Fullerton was dining out. "I've just had a letter from Fanny," she said. "She seems very lonely at Ashburnham; but I'm glad she has escaped this dreadful heat."

"That reminds me," Briggs remarked. "I think you'd better not wait till next month before you go up

to Waverly. The children will be far better off up there. This heat may continue all through the month. Can't you get away by Saturday?"

He did not notice that she turned pale.

"I suppose we could," she replied.

"I shall close up the house," he continued, "and take rooms at the club. If I can manage it I'll go up to Waverly with you for over Sunday. Tomorrow I'll send Michael there to open the house and get things ready. His wife had better go with him, too," he added, as an afterthought.

"There'll be no need of going to all that expense," said Helen, flushing. Then she went on, quickly: "Miss Munroe and I can open the house, and we can get Mary Watson's daughter to help us."

"No," said Briggs, decisively. "I want the place to be aired and put in shape before you get there. You're too tired to look after those things, anyway, and Miss Munroe has all she can do to take care of the children."

Helen rose from the table, and her husband followed her out of the room. "I must go right back to the House," he said. "We shall probably have a long session to-night, so I sha'n't be home till late. You needn't have anyone wait up for me."

Their partings after dinner had lately become very difficult, involving unnecessary and uncomfortable explanations. Helen had either to attend to some trifling domestic detail or to hurry up stairs to the nursery, and Briggs was absorbed in work that called him to his study or out of the house. They talked a good deal now about matters that did not relate to themselves. Sometimes it was hard to find a topic. They were in that most miserable of human situations where, loving each other, they were able only to inflict torture on each other. Briggs found relief in his work; Helen devoted more time to the children. She began to wonder if she had not neglected them, if she had not left them too much to their government. It seemed to her, at times,

that they cared as much for Miss Munroe as for herself.

With his buoyant nature it was impossible for Douglas Briggs to remain steadily depressed. There were moments when he felt sure that the trouble between his wife and himself would suddenly disappear. Some day, when he returned home, she would meet him in the hall or on the stairs, and by a look, a gesture, would let him know that she had forgiven him. Then he would take her in his arms. She was in the right, of course, but she would see that he had been forced to do what he had done; that his sin had not been nearly so great as it seemed to her, and that he was going to pay for it; that he had paid for it already, and he would make ample amends in the future.

Helen, however, had no such illusion. She could see no way out of the difficulty. It was not merely that her respect for her husband had gone; she was bitterly disappointed and hurt. She had decided never to speak to him about Franklin West's insult, but it was her husband's unconscious participation in it that caused her the deepest humiliation and resentment. On the other hand, the very cruelty of her sufferings deepened both her pity for her husband and her love. The thought of leaving him now made her feel faint. She wanted to stay with him and to be more to him than she had ever been. But in his presence she felt powerless; she could not even be herself.

During the next few days, in spite of the heat, that continued to be severe, Helen worked hard helping to close the house and to prepare the children's Summer clothes. Dorothy began to be irritable, and Jack had developed an affection of the throat that frightened her. The doctors told her, however, that the boy would be well again after he had been for a few days in the pure air of Waverly. It was a relief to her to worry about Jack and to care for him, just as it was a satisfaction to go to bed exhausted at the end of each day.

On Friday afternoon Douglas Briggs

returned home early. "I sha'n't be here for dinner," he said. "I'm going to a committee meeting at Aspinwall's house, and it'll last till evening, probably. Anyway, he's asked me to stay for a stag dinner. His wife's away, you know."

"Aren't you too busy to go with us to-morrow, Douglas?" Helen asked. "You've not had a minute to yourself this week. Miss Munroe and I can manage very well."

Briggs hesitated. "It *is* a very hard time for me to leave," he said. "I ought to be at the House to-morrow morning. But I didn't want you and the children to stay till Monday. It's so hot here——"

"We'll go on, as planned, and you can stay here," Helen interrupted. She turned away quickly and left him with the feeling that the matter had been taken out of his hands. This turn of affairs displeased him. He decided he would go to Waverly anyway. But when he had returned to the cab waiting at the door he recovered from his resentment. Helen's plan was best, after all. In a week or two there would be a lull, and he could run over to New York and then up the river to Waverly. Perhaps by that time Helen would feel rested and take a different view of things. She had been tired and nervous lately. He liked himself for his leniency toward his wife, and when he reached Aspinwall's house it was in the frame of mind that always enabled him to appear at his best, friendly and frank, but aggressive.

The next day Briggs drove with his family to the morning train. When he bade them good-bye he tried to maintain a jocular air. The children clamored after him from the open window, and Dorothy's face gave promise of tears. "Oh, I shall see you all in a few days," he said, as he stood on the platform. "That is, if I hear that Dorothy and Jack are good. I won't come if they are not good."

"Oh, we'll be awfully good, papa," said Dorothy, earnestly.

A thick-set young man, with big spectacles, came hurrying to the train,

carrying a heavy suit-case. Briggs did not recognize him till he was close at hand.

"Oh, hello, Farley! Going on this train? That's fine. You can look after these people of mine. Helen," Briggs called through the window, "here's Farley. He's going over, too."

"I don't know that I can get a seat in the car," Farley panted.

Briggs turned to the conductor, who stood at the steps. "Oh, doubtless Lawton can fix you up," he remarked, pleasantly, displaying his genius for remembering names.

The conductor brightened. "Oh, that'll be all right," he said. "Just jump in," he added, to Farley. "There are two or three vacant places, and I'll try to get one of the passengers to change, so that you can sit with the Congressman's family."

Briggs walked forward and stood at the window. "I feel more comfortable now," he said to Farley, with a smile.

The conductor managed to secure the seat beside Helen, and a moment later the train pulled out of the station. Farley had begun to entertain Dorothy and Jack, whom he had seen a few times at home and in the parks. He seemed to know how to approach children; he never talked down to them; he gave them the feeling that they were meeting him on equal terms. His honest eyes and his large, smiling mouth at once won their confidence.

"I'm just running over for Sunday," he explained to Helen. "Awful day to travel, isn't it? But we're going to have a pretty important meeting of our club—the Citizens' Club, you know. We're getting after Rathburn. Know him?"

"He has been at our house to see Mr. Briggs," Helen replied. She remembered him as a quiet, apparently well-bred man, with a gray, pointed beard, fond of talking about his hobby, the cultivation of roses.

"I think we've got him where we want him, now," Farley continued. "He's been pretty foxy, but we've

caught him napping in that big water-supply steal. He engineered the whole job. It must have cost the city a half-million dollars more than it should have cost. They say he pulled out a hundred thousand for himself. But it's going to queer him for good!"

"Do you mean that you are going to have him prosecuted?" Helen asked.

Farley could not keep from smiling at the simplicity of the question. "Hardly that. That would be more than we could hope for. But if we can only have the thing investigated, and get the people to realize what's been done, why, his political career will be over. There's a whole gang of 'em in with him; but most of 'em have covered their tracks." Farley sighed. "It's strange," he said, "how hard it is to rouse public opinion. Sometimes I believe our people are the most indifferent in the world. They haven't any sense of personal responsibility. That's why we have so many rascals in public life. If I were going in for rascality," he concluded, with a laugh, "I'd become a politician. It's the safest and the most profitable way of making money. Big returns and mighty little risk."

Farley apparently did not notice the look of distress in Helen's eyes. Encouraged by her questions, he went on to give her an account of the way in which the club had been founded. "I'd been doing the political work in New York for the *Gazette* for three years," he said; "so that gave me a chance to see things from the inside. And what I did see made me so sick that I thought of quitting the business. But one night I was talking things over with Jimmy Barker. You've heard of him, of course. He made me look at things from another point of view. Jimmy's father left him half a million dollars, and Jimmy, instead of spending it all on himself, is blowing it in on his philanthropic schemes. Lately he's been living down on the East Side and working for a reform in the tenement-house laws. Well, he made me see that, in-

stead of quitting political work, because the society wasn't good enough for me, I ought to stay in it and help to make it a little cleaner, if I could. So he got me to bring together a lot of fellows that look at things as we do, and we formed a sort of organization. At first we had only a few rooms downtown. Now we have a house uptown and a pretty big membership. It's all Jimmy's work. He's given us a lot of money, and he's kept us going when we got discouraged by his enthusiasm—and his money, too. I never knew such a man; nothing discourages him." Farley's eyes flashed through his big glasses in the glow of talk. Helen realized for the first time that at moments he was almost handsome.

"Douglas has often spoken to me about the work of your club," she remarked. "He says it is having a great influence in New York."

"I wish we could persuade him to come in with us," Farley said, wistfully. "I've been trying to get him for months. He's just the kind of man we need most. You know we've been careful to keep absolutely non-partisan. We have public men from both parties among our members. It's been pretty hard keeping 'em together. There are a lot of hot-heads among reformers, you know," he went on, smiling. "I suppose when a man gets a strong bias in any direction it's apt to throw him off his equilibrium. But most of our men have seen that partisanship would be the death of us. Our great point is to keep the city government out of politics as much as possible. Of course, there's no reason why it shouldn't be, except there seems to be a sort of weakness in human nature for following a banner and going in crowds."

"Then you don't pay attention to politics outside of New York?" Helen asked.

"Only indirectly," Farley replied. "Some time we hope we can have a National organization like our city club to look after some of those rascals down in Washington. But as I was saying," Farley resumed, eagerly, "if

I could only get Mr. Briggs to join us, then he'd meet our men, and they'd get to understand him. They don't understand him now. They think he's been an out-and-out machine man. Of course, that's all nonsense. I only wish we had more machine men like him."

Helen turned her head away. Dorothy and Jack were playing games with Miss Munroe. When Jack looked up quickly she noticed a little movement of the head that always reminded her of his father. The first time she had noticed this resemblance it had given her a thrill of happiness.

XIII

ON the arrival of the train in New York Farley placed his friends in a carriage. "I'm not going to bid you good-bye," he said. "I'll take the elevated and I'll be at the Grand Central station before you have time to get there."

Helen offered a protest, but Farley smilingly insisted. "It's on my way uptown," he explained. "It won't be the least trouble."

He had charmed Dorothy on the way over from Washington; for an hour she had lain asleep in his arms. Now she clamored that he be given a place in the carriage.

"I can sit in Mr. Farley's lap," she pleaded.

"No, Dorothy," said Farley, "I'd like that all right; but the carriage is crowded already."

"Then I'll go with Mr. Farley," Dorothy insisted. This compromise, however, was instantly rejected, and the driver whipped off. When Helen reached the station Farley had already secured the tickets and the seats in the parlor car.

"I wish Mr. Farley was going with us," said Jack.

"Oh, do come, please," Dorothy exclaimed, delighted.

Farley laughed.

"Perhaps Mr. Farley will come some day," said Helen. "Perhaps he'll come with papa."

"Oh, good!" Jack shouted.

"Well, I want Mr. Farley now," Dorothy pouted. The fatigue of the journey had begun to tell on her.

Farley walked down to the car and saw his friends settled in their places. As the train pulled out of the station he stood on the platform and watched till it disappeared. Then he sighed and walked slowly back to the street. How fortunate some men are in this world, he thought. Douglas Briggs was an example. He had everything that could contribute to happiness—success, power, money, a happy home, a wife who must be a perpetual inspiration, and children. Farley cared comparatively little for money or power; he was content to follow his life in the world as it had been laid out for him; but sometimes he grew depressed as he thought that the deeper satisfaction, the love of a wife and of children, he should probably never know. For the past year this feeling had become a conviction. He encouraged no morbid sentiment about it, however. He had plenty of interests and pleasures; his work alone brought rewards that were worth striving for, and in his friendships, his interests and his books he found distraction and solace. He was one of those men who are never tempted to experiment with their emotions; so he had kept his mind wholesome, and he had never known the disappointment and the bitterness of those who try to substitute self-indulgence for happiness.

Farley himself hardly realized how much his view of life was influenced by his attitude toward women. He had the exalted view of the sex that only those men can take who have escaped the taint of vice. He had first become interested in Douglas Briggs through seeing Helen. He thought there must be remarkable qualities in a man who could win the love of a woman like that. Until within a few months he had seen Helen only a few times. Now he felt as if he had known her always. He looked back on himself during the years before he first saw

her as if he had been someone else, with a feeling very like pity. There were also moments of weakness when he thought with pity of himself as he had been since he knew her.

If Farley had known the misery he had caused Helen Briggs he would have experienced an agony of regret greater than he had ever felt. On the way to Waverly Helen kept thinking of her talk with him on the train. The revelation of his own character that Farley had given made Helen compare him with her husband. She had never before appreciated the rare qualities of the journalist, his inflexible honesty, his candor, his generous admirations, his supreme unselfishness. At the thought of his devotion to her husband Helen felt her face flush with shame. Douglas, of course, knew how much Farley admired him; but Douglas was used to admiration—he had received it all his life.

In a few days Helen had settled into the monotony of Waverly. The old friends came to see her; the old gaieties, however, continued without her. She devoted herself chiefly to the children, giving Miss Munroe a holiday of several weeks. She scrupulously wrote to her husband every day, and he answered as regularly. He said that Congress would probably not adjourn till late in July, and as he was desperately driven with work it might be impossible for him to come to Waverly till the session had ended. It was, in fact, not till the first week in August that the session closed. Two days later Helen received a telegram from her husband saying that she might expect him early in the evening; this was soon followed by another message announcing that he had been detained in New York. Two days later he came; but he stayed only for the night, returning to New York in the morning. The work in preparation for the Fall campaign had begun unusually early, he said. An enormous amount of work had to be done, and he must stay in town, to be sure it was done right. Helen offered to leave the children with Miss Munroe and

open the New York house for him, but he refused. No, she needed the rest. Besides, he could be perfectly comfortable at the club. For the next few weeks he would have to be in consultation with people day and night.

During the rest of the Summer he ran up to Waverly several times, rarely staying for more than a day. His visits were painful to them both, though they gave great delight to the children. When September came Helen made preparations for her return to New York. She wanted to live under the same roof with him, even though she might rarely see him. At times her absence from him, and the strangeness with which they greeted each other on meeting, terrified her. The state of things seemed worse than open dissension. She would not confess to herself the fear that he would discover she was not indispensable to him; but in spite of the late September heat, it was with great relief that a week before the nominating convention she found herself with the children in the city again.

XIV

On the morning after the convention Douglas Briggs sat in his study, looking over his correspondence. He heard a tap at the door, and Michael entered with two telegrams.

"If any callers come," said the Congressman, "take them into the reception room."

"Yes, sir."

"And give these telegrams to Sam."

Michael nodded gravely; but he did not stir.

"That's all," said Briggs, without looking up.

"It's glad I am, sir, ye got ahead o' them devils last night," said Michael.

"Thank you, Michael; we had a hard fight."

"Sure that was a fine speech ye made, sir."

Douglas raised his head. "I'm glad you heard it." He glanced

sharply at Michael. "You were there, then?"

"No, sir, but me cousin Ned was, that works for Mr. Barstow over the way. He told me about it this mornin', an' I've read it in the mornin' papers."

"I haven't had time to look at the papers yet," Briggs remarked, absently.

"Here they are, sir."

"All right."

Michael kept his position. "Ned said it was fine the way ye drove the lies down their throats, sir."

"Oh, well, I had to get back at 'em somehow," Briggs replied, carelessly.

Michael assumed a more familiar attitude. "Sure it's a shame the things they say about a man when he's in politics. There was Miles O'Connor, over in the Ninth Ward, one of the foineest men——"

"I guess that'll do, Michael," Briggs interrupted. "Have those telegrams sent as soon as you can."

Michael hurriedly left the room.

"Yes, sir," he said at the door.

Douglas passed one hand over his forehead. "God!" he muttered. "I have to keep up this bluff even before my servants." Just as he resumed work he heard Michael's tap again. "Come in," he cried, impatiently.

"Here's a note that just come by messenger, sir," said Michael.

"Put it on the table, and don't interrupt me again till I ring. Keep any other letters and telegrams till Mr. Fullerton comes down."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, sir," said Michael. "Mr. West called you up on the telephone a little while ago."

Briggs looked surprised. "Mr. Franklin West?" he asked, with a frown.

"Yes, sir."

"From Washington, do you mean? Why didn't you let me know?"

"No, sir, not from Washington. He's here in town, sir. He told me not to wake you up."

"Where is he?" Briggs asked.

"He's stoppin' at a hotel, sir."

Briggs hesitated. "At a hotel?" he repeated. "What did he go to a

hotel for? He always stays here when he comes to town."

"He come over last night on the midnight train, sir. Here's the telephone number. He said perhaps you'd be kind enough to call him up this mornin' and let him know when it would be most convenient for you to see him."

"Strange," Briggs remarked, thoughtfully. Then he turned to Michael. "Did he say that anyone was with him?"

Michael shook his head. "He only said he'd wait at the hotel till he heard from you, sir."

Briggs stood for a moment thinking. Then he said, with two fingers on his lips: "You tell Sam to drive down right off and bring Mr. West up here. Tell him to bring Mr. West's luggage, too, and ask him to say to Mr. West that there's a room all ready for him, as usual. This is a funny time for him to stand on ceremony with me."

Michael started to go out, then he turned. "I suppose you didn't know Miss Fanny came last night, sir."

"I thought she wasn't coming till next week."

"She arrived last night, sir, at nine o'clock. She sat up for you, sir, till she fell asleep in the chair, and Mrs. Briggs made her go to bed."

"Good girl," said Briggs. "I suppose she hasn't come down yet."

"No, sir."

A half-hour later Briggs heard the rustle of skirts outside the study door. Then the door opened softly. He went on busily writing. Light steps crossed to the chair behind him.

"Ahem!"

"Oh, hello, Fanny!" he said, without looking up.

"How did you know it was me?" cried Fanny, in a tone of disappointment.

Briggs leaned back in his chair and received an impulsive kiss on the cheek. "Well, I don't know anyone else who'd steal in just like that."

"Michael told you, didn't he?"

"Perhaps."

"He didn't want to let me come in." Fanny sat on the edge of the desk. "He said you were busy. You—*busy!*"

Douglas Briggs smiled. "Well, I don't seem to be busy whenever you're around, do I? Still, I have to do a little work now and then."

"I think there's too much work in the world," Fanny pouted. "Now there's poor Guy. Think how he works!"

"Guy! Why, at this minute he's sound asleep, and it's nearly ten o'clock."

"But think how he worked at that old nomination meeting of yours! He didn't get home till nearly morning."

"Well, I didn't, either."

"But you're tough, Uncle Doug; Guy is delicate."

"They generally are, at his age," Briggs acknowledged, drily, "especially when they have just come out of college."

"I think you're horrid to say such things about Guy, when he helps you so, too. I've just been up to see him."

Briggs sat back in his chair. "W-h-hat!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, you needn't be shocked! I just *peeked* in. He was sound asleep, with his head resting on one hand, just like this, and the sweetest little blush on his face, and his hair in the cunningest little bang on his forehead. I was so relieved about one thing."

"What's that?"

Fanny looked stealthily around the room. "He doesn't snore!" she said, with her hand over her mouth.

"Oh! But suppose he had snored?"

Fanny slid from the desk and drew herself up. "Then, of course, I should have been obliged to—well, to break the——"

"Do you mean to say there's an engagement between you two?"

Fanny held her hand over her uncle's lips. "Sh! No, not that. What would dad say if he heard you? Only he's been writing me the loveliest letters this Summer. M'm!"

"I shall have to congratulate Guy on not snoring. But suppose," Briggs

continued, confidentially, "suppose I should tell you that sometimes he does snore?"

Fanny tossed back her head. "Well, that wouldn't make any difference, either. Come to think of it, if Guy had snored this morning, his snoring would have been nice. Funny about love, isn't it, Uncle Doug?" Fanny added, pensively.

"What is?"

"It makes everything nice."

"In the one you love, you mean?"

Fanny nodded. "M'm—h'm!"

"Then you're really in love with Guy?"

Fanny danced away. "Oh, I didn't say that."

"Fanny," said Briggs, gently.

Fanny edged toward the table.

"Well?" She still kept out of reach.

"Come over here," Briggs urged.

Fanny stood at her uncle's side, with one hand on the desk; Briggs let his hand rest on hers. "If you and Guy are really in love with each other, I have a bit of advice to give you."

"Oh, you're going to tell me how foolish it is to get married, aren't you? That's the way married people always talk."

Briggs smiled and shook his head.

"No, I don't mean that."

"Well? Wait till Guy gets rich, I suppose." She sighed. "Then I know I shall die an old maid!"

"No, I don't mean that, either."

"What do you mean, then?" Fanny said, severely.

"Make him give up the foolish notion he has of going into politics."

"Oh, Uncle Doug!" Fanny exclaimed, reproachfully.

"Guy is a good, clean hearted young fellow. You don't want him to become cynical and hypocritical and deceitful, do you? You don't want him to believe there's no such thing as unselfishness in the world, that whenever a man turns his hand he expects to be paid for it ten times over?"

Fanny looked with astonishment at her uncle. "Well, what in the world is the matter with you?" she said, after a moment.

Briggs patted her hand. "There, there! I won't preach any more. But I mean what I say."

When Fanny spoke again there were tears in her voice. "Isn't he a good secretary?"

"Oh, yes, good enough."

"You're mad because he's staying in bed so late."

"Nonsense! I told Michael myself not to call him. He's worked himself to death during the past few weeks. I had to fight for my renomination, you know."

"You did?" said Fanny, with a change of tone. "Why, I thought you were the most popular man in New York."

"Well, the most popular men have enemies," Briggs replied, grimly.

Fanny suddenly became affectionate, almost pathetic. "And I never congratulated you! I was so sure you'd be nominated—why, I took it as a matter of course."

Briggs looked away. "Yes, you women folks always do," he said, bitterly. "It is only the disappointments in life that you don't take as matters of course."

Fanny clapped her hands. "Uncle Doug, now I know what the trouble is. You haven't had any breakfast. Dad's always as cross as two sticks till he's had his."

"Yes, I have. I'm tired, that's all. Now, run along, like a good girl. I've got a lot of work to do."

"Oh!" Fanny tossed her head, rose lightly on tiptoe and, swaying back and forth, started for the door. There she turned. "You forget I've had a birthday since I saw you last," she said, haughtily.

Her uncle had begun to write again. "Did you? What was it—fourteen, fifteen—?"

Fanny stiffened her fingers and held them before her eyes. "Ugh!" she exclaimed.

As she turned to open the door she was thrust rudely back. Someone had pushed the door from the other side. She turned quickly and met the astonished face of Guy Fullerton.

"Fanny!" Guy cried, joyously.

"When in the world did you get here?"

Fanny held out both hands. Guy seized them and tried to draw her toward him. She stopped him with a warning gesture, and glanced at her uncle.

"Go ahead," said Douglas Briggs. "I'm not looking."

Guy and Fanny embraced silently.

Fanny glanced at the shoulders bent over the table. "Thank you, sir," she said, meekly.

"Why didn't you let me know you were coming?" Guy cried, reproachfully.

"Because I thought I'd give you a surprise, sleepy-head."

Briggs turned on his swivel-chair. "I guess you two'd better go into the other room."

"Can't I do anything for you, sir?" Guy asked. "The correspondence?"

"No hurry about that. I'll ring when I need you. Oh, Fanny, you might ask your aunt to look in here a moment. I want to speak to her."

"All right." Fanny danced radiantly out of the room, followed by Guy. A moment later Briggs heard her call up the stairs: "Oh, auntie, Uncle Doug wants you."

He listened and heard his wife descending. The sound of her footsteps gave him a strange feeling of mingled pleasure and discomfort. He had begun to resent her treatment of him. "Good-morning," he said, cheerfully, as she entered. He rose quickly and offered her a chair.

"Did you wish to see me?" Helen asked, still standing.

"Yes. There were one or two things I wanted to talk over. Won't you sit down?"

Helen took the seat. "Thank you," she said.

"How are the children this morning?"

"I've just left them in the nursery. They are perfectly well."

"Hasn't Miss Munroe taken them out yet?"

Helen met his look. "Miss Munroe is leaving to-day," she replied.

"What?" he cried, astonished.

"I told you several weeks ago that she was going to leave."

"But I didn't think you'd—" Briggs turned away and rested his head on his hand, with his elbow on the table. "Will you be kind enough to tell me why you have sent Miss Munroe away?" he asked, in a tone that showed he was trying to control himself. "She's been with the children ever since they were born. You can't get anyone to fill her place."

"I sent her away because we couldn't afford to keep her," Helen replied.

"What do you mean by *we*?"

"Because *I* couldn't afford to keep her, then."

"And you think that I don't count at all!" He laughed bitterly. "Those children are as much my children as yours, and I propose to have something to say about the way they are taken care of." He glanced angrily at Helen, who remained silent. "You can be pretty exasperating at times, Helen. What do you propose to do with the children when we go back to Washington?"

"I am not going back to Washington," she replied, in a low voice.

"What?"

"I am not going back to Washington."

"What do you mean by that?"

"We can't afford—"

"Can't afford! I'm sick of hearing that expression. You've used it a thousand times in the past six months. You make me feel as if I were a pauper or a thief."

"I was going to say that we couldn't afford to live in Washington as we've been living," she continued, as if she had not heard him. "When you leave here I shall take the children to my place in Waverly and pass the Winter there."

"*My* place!" he repeated, coldly. He turned away. "Yes, it is your place."

"Did you send for me to speak about the children?"

"No, I wanted to consult you about our house in Washington. I have a chance to lease it for two years.

Senator Wadsworth is looking for a place, and he said the other day he'd take the house whenever I wanted to rent it. I had told him I didn't feel sure of going back, and, of course, I knew how you hated the house," he concluded, harshly. "If you prefer to live somewhere else, I'm willing."

"I have made up my mind not to go back," said Helen.

"And may I ask how long you propose to keep away from Washington? Do you intend to cut yourself off from my political life altogether?"

"You know why I want to cut myself off from it," Helen replied, her voice trembling.

"I should think I did! You've rubbed that in enough. I suppose you realize what people will say?"

"There are plenty of Congressmen's wives who don't go to Washington with their husbands."

"But you've taken part in the life. You've been conspicuous."

"You can say that I didn't feel equal to entertaining this Winter, and stayed at home to take care of my children. It will be true, too."

He looked at her with solicitude in his face. "Do you mean that you are ill, Helen?"

"I'm sick. I'm sick of living. But for the children, I could wish that I——"

"Then I don't count in your feelings or in your life? Helen, I think I have been pretty patient with you so far, and if I break out now and then you can't blame me. Since that night in Washington, the night of your ball, you've been a changed woman. You keep the children away from me as if you were afraid I'd contaminate them. You have cut down our expenses and forced us all to live as if we were on the verge of poverty. You've made our house as gloomy as a tomb. Now, I warn you, look out! Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"And you propose to go on in this way?"

"That is one reason why I have decided not to go to Washington."

"I don't understand you."

"Because I saw how unhappy I made you. I thought you would be happier without me. And I can't be different—I can't!" she broke out, passionately. "I can't live as we used to live, knowing that the money I spend——"

She checked herself. Douglas Briggs waited. "Well?" he said.

"Knowing where it comes from, Douglas," she went on, lowering her voice. He made no comment, and she added, with a change of tone: "I had hoped things might be different this morning."

He looked mystified. "Different?" he repeated.

"I hoped that you wouldn't have to go back to Washington."

"That I shouldn't get the nomination, do you mean?" Then he laughed. "You're a nice wife for a man to have. I wonder how you'd feel if you knew what the loss of that nomination would mean to me?"

"If it meant poverty or humiliation I should have been glad to share it with you, Douglas."

He turned away from her with the impatient movement of his head that she had so often seen Jack make. "Now, please don't waste any heroics on me. But let me tell you one thing, Helen. If I hadn't been nominated last night I should have been a ruined man. Just at present I haven't five thousand dollars in the world. I told you last Spring how much it cost us to live. True, last year I made twice as much as I'd made the year before; but during the past few months I've lost every cent of it."

Helen looked incredulous. Of late she often assumed an expression of mistrust at his statements that secretly enraged him. "How have you lost it?" she asked, fixing her eyes on him.

Briggs shrugged his shoulders. "By trying to make a fortune quick, just as many another man has done. I took greater risks—that's all. Perhaps you'd like to know why I did that? I did it in order to make myself independent of those men in

Washington—the men you're so down on. I hoped that I could throw them off and go to you and say that I was straight."

"And you thought that would please me?" Helen asked, in a tone of deep reproach.

He drew a long breath. "Well, I don't know that anything will please you nowadays, Helen, but I thought it might."

"That the money gained by such means——"

"You don't mean to say that speculating is dishonest, do you?" he asked, with a harsh laugh.

"If the money that you speculated with had been honestly earned it would be bad enough, but money—Oh, why do you force me to say these things? You know perfectly well what I think."

He turned away, with disappointment and resentment in his face. "I see that it's useless to try to please you. Perhaps it's just as well that you're not going to Washington with me."

She rose from her seat and started to leave the room, but as if on an impulse she stopped. "I suppose a woman's way of looking at these things is different from a man's, Douglas. A woman can't understand how hard it is for a man—how many temptations he has. Oh, I don't blame you, Douglas; you're doing all that for me—taking all those risks, and losing everything—and I do appreciate it. But if I could only make you see that it is all wrong, that I'd love you poor and disappointed, a thousand times more than successful and——"

"And dishonest!" he interrupted. "That's what you were going to say, isn't it? Well, I guess it's impossible for us to agree about these matters. Anyway, I've got the nomination, and that means my re-election. We've got to take things as they come in this world." Helen walked slowly toward the door. "Then you've made up your mind?" he said, thinking she might weaken.

"I have made up my mind not to

return to Washington," she replied, without meeting his look.

Briggs turned away impatiently. "Very well, then; I'll take rooms at a hotel."

When Helen had closed the door behind her Douglas Briggs sank into his chair and covered his face with his hands. After his work and worry of the past few weeks it seemed hard to him that he should be obliged to go through such a scene with his wife. For a few minutes he tortured himself with self-pity. He heard a rap at the door, but he paid no attention to it. He was in the mood where he wanted to speak to no one—to see no one.

XV

"UNCLE DOUG!"

Briggs whirled impatiently in his chair. "Eh?"

Fanny came forward. "Say, Uncle Doug."

"Well, what is it?"

"What's the matter?" Fanny asked.

Briggs frowned. "Matter!" he repeated. "What do you mean?"

"You know. What's the matter between auntie and you? I don't mind your being cross with me a bit," she added, brightly.

Then he softened. "My dear little girl, you mustn't interfere with things that don't concern you."

Fanny's eyes flashed. "Please *don't*! Besides, they do concern me. Don't you suppose I care when I see auntie come out of here with her face just as white and her eyes looking as if they were going to pop out of her head?"

"You see too much, Fanny."

"Well, what do you suppose my eyes were made for, anyway?" Fanny cried, indignantly. "Besides, I don't have anything else to do. Guy's gone away and left me."

"What did he do that for?"

"Because I told him to."

"Have you two been quarreling?" Briggs asked, severely.

"No, we haven't," Fanny replied, with an emphatic toss of her head.

"I told him he'd better go and attend to your business, instead of billing and cooing with me. There were a lot of people who wanted to see you. So, as you were busy, of course Guy had to represent you."

Briggs rose hastily. "Where are they?" he asked.

As Fanny did not like the tone of the question, she kept him waiting for a moment. "In the library," she finally conceded.

"It's probably Monahan and his gang," said Briggs, hurrying out of the room. "I forgot to ask Michael—"

"Well, then, tell Guy—" Fanny called after him, but he disappeared before she had time to finish the sentence. She stood disconsolate in the middle of the room. "Nobody seems to care for me around here," she said. "I've a good mind to go home." Then she turned and saw Guy Fullerton smiling at her.

"Hello, Fan!" he said.

Fanny promptly turned her back on him.

"Everything seems to be going wrong this morning," she said. "I almost wish I hadn't come."

"Oh, do you, do you?" Guy walked to the opposite side of the room, dropped into a chair and rested his head on his hand.

"Now, don't you go and be silly," cried Fanny, glancing at him over her shoulder.

Guy looked relieved. "I thought you were mad with me. Oh, that's all right, then. If you could only have some sort of sign to show just *who* you're angry with, you know! Fan," he went on, softly, "as long as we're alone, can't we—can't we fix it up? You and—" He touched his chest with his forefinger.

Fanny gave a little jump. Her eyes beamed. "Sir," she cried, "is this a proposal?" Then she added, in a tone of disappointment: "Does it come like this?"

"You know I've been awfully fond of you for a long time," Guy pleaded.

Fanny smiled into his face. "How long?"

"Well, since last Winter. Since those days we went skating together."

Fanny clasped her hands gaily. "Weren't they glorious! Well, I'll say one thing for you, you're a good *skater*." Then she rolled her eyes. "But your dancing!"

"Will you?" said Guy, plaintively.

Fanny dropped into a chair and let her hands rest in her lap. She grew very thoughtful. "I'll think about it," she said.

"Think about it!" Guy repeated, derisively.

Fanny assumed an injured air. "Yes, they always say that in books. I'm going to do this in the proper way, even if you don't."

Guy looked disconsolate. "Oh, you never take a fellow seriously."

"Don't I?" This time Fanny's voice had the ring of sincerity. "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Just say we're engaged, can't you?"

Fanny rose and drew herself up with dignity. "You must speak to my father," she said, with a demure bow.

"Oh, there you are again! You won't take me seriously for one consecutive minute."

Fanny clasped her hands again and held them extended before her. "I have an idea. Let's pretend that I'm dad. That'll be great. Now here's dad, walking up and down the library. That's what he always used to do whenever I got into a scrape and the governess sent me to him." She cleared her throat and thrust her hand into her shirt-waist. "Well, sir?" she said, in a deep voice.

"Oh, say, now!" Guy exclaimed, in disgust.

Fanny held her head on one side and made a warning gesture. "Oh, I'm serious about this. You must answer my questions if you want to please me. If you don't, I'll say 'No' outright, and I'll get Uncle Doug to discharge you. So you'd better look out, or you'll lose your job."

In spite of himself, Guy smiled.

"All right," he said, to humor her. "Fire away!"

Fanny cleared her throat again and threw back her shoulders. "Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

Guy tried to mimic her assumed voice. "You can give me your child, sir."

Fanny glared at him. "Now you know very well you wouldn't talk like that!" She shook her head and drew her lips tightly together. "I guess you don't know dad. M'm."

"Well, what would I say?"

"Something foolish, I suppose," Fanny replied, carelessly. "But this is what you ought to say," she went on, with elaborate politeness, and striking an attitude. "Sir, I love your beautiful daughter, Miss Fanny, and I ask your permission to make her my wife."

"Oh!" Guy groaned.

"But it takes an awfully fascinating man to talk like that. Now let's get on." She burlesqued her father's manner again. "So you want to marry Fanny, do you? Well, since she's been out of school, you're about the tenth man who has asked——"

"What? Do you mean to say that all last Summer, while I was slaving down in Washington——?"

"This time my father would tell you to leave the house," said Fanny, haughtily, with a wave of her hand.

"Now, look here, I don't like this game," Guy declared.

"But I like it. Therefore it goes. Now don't be a silly boy. You might as well get used to dad's ways first as last. Ahem! As I said, you are the——er——the eleventh. Now, what claim have you on my daughter?"

Guy seized the chance. "She's head and ears in love with me," he cried, before she had time to stop him. "She can't live without me."

Fanny seized a book and held it in the air. "Do you know what dad would do if you said that? He'd pack me home to Ashburnham, and I'd have to stay there all Winter."

"I had to tell the truth, didn't I?" Guy asked, meekly.

"Well, dad wouldn't believe you,

anyway," Fanny replied. Her voice deepened again. "Young man, since you are thinking of getting married, I presume you are in a position to support a wife. What is your income?"

Guy looked serious. "I guess I won't play any more. This is becoming too personal."

Fanny held her hand at her ear. "I didn't quite catch what you said. Five thousand?"

"One thousand, since you're determined to know, inquisitive; one thousand and keep," Guy replied, snappishly. "I don't even have to pay my laundry bills. That's just twenty dollars a week spending money."

The light faded from Fanny's eyes. "And you've been sending me all those flowers on that?" she asked.

"Well, flowers don't cost so much in Summer. I intended to stop when the cold weather came."

"But, Guy, dear, I thought you got ever so much more than that! You poor thing! Why, I spend twice as much as that myself, and I'm always sending home for more."

"Well, I can't help it if I'm not rich," Guy grumbled, keeping his face turned from her.

Fanny inspected him carefully, as if taking an inventory. "Do you know what dad would do?" she asked. Guy knew that her eyes were on him.

"Eh?" he said.

"If you told him how much you were earning," Fanny explained.

"Oh, he'd faint away, I suppose!"

Fanny shook her head. "No, he wouldn't," she replied, sadly. "He'd just laugh that big laugh of his. He has enormous teeth. It's fascinating to watch 'em. His sense of humor's awful!"

Guy sighed. "I suppose I might as well give you up," he said, remembering vaguely that he had read of a young and interesting lover who used that speech on a similar occasion.

"Well, I guess not!" Fanny exclaimed. Then she clapped her hands over her mouth. "Oh, I s'pose I do kind of like you."

"Why don't you treat me better, then?"

Fanny lowered her head and looked up at him with mournful eyes. "You're awfully interesting when you're sad like this."

Guy twisted impatiently. "Oh!" he exclaimed.

Fanny walked toward him and began to play with the buttons of his coat. "Say, Guy, what did you take this place for—this place with Uncle Doug?"

"I thought it would be a good place to see life."

"To see life!" Fanny repeated, satirically.

"M'm—h'm! And to get into politics, perhaps."

Fanny burst out laughing. "You! You get into politics?"

Guy looked injured. "I don't see anything funny about that."

"And do the things that Uncle Doug does?" Fanny cried.

"Yes," said Guy, in a loud voice.

Fanny seized him by both arms. "Now, look here. You're no more fit for politics than—well, than dad is, and the mere sight of a politician makes dad froth at the mouth. Oh, he says awful things about 'em!"

"Then he hates your uncle, does he?"

"No, he doesn't, stupid!" Fanny cried, shaking him. "But he says Uncle Doug made the greatest mistake of his life when he went into politics. It spoiled him as a lawyer."

"Well, what's all this got to do with us?" Guy asked, drawing away.

"Us! Isn't that a nice word? Dad would never let *us* be—well, you know—if you were going to stick to politics, not to mention the twenty a week."

"What can I do, then? I'm not clever, like other fellows. Don't you suppose I know I'd have lost my position long ago if your uncle wasn't the best man in the world?"

Fanny began to bite the tips of her fingers. "I suppose I'll have to speak to dad myself," she said, slowly. "I'll make him give you a job in the factory."

"In the factory?" Guy exclaimed, horror-stricken.

Fanny turned upon him indignantly. "Yes. You don't mean to say! Well, you'll have to get over those notions. I suppose you got 'em at college. Dad'll make you put on overalls and begin at the bottom. Oh, dad's awfully thorough."

Guy considered the matter. "How much would he give me?"

"Lots of fellows begin at three a week," said Fanny. Guy looked at her reproachfully. "Perhaps through influence you may be able to get as much as ten." Then Fanny went on briskly: "Now, look here. Dad's always been sorry that I wasn't a boy, so that I could take the business, and all that. But I guess I'll take it, all the same. Only you'll be my representative. See? After you've learned how to run things, dad may put you in charge of the New York office. Won't it be grand? We'll have a box at the opera and we'll—" Fanny stopped. Her aunt stood at the door. "Oh, auntie, how much does it cost to keep house in New York?"

Helen Briggs smiled. "That depends."

"On what?"

"On whether you live in a house or an apartment—on the way you live—on a thousand things."

"To live well, I mean. How much does this house cost a year?"

"The rent is three thousand."

Fanny grew limp. "Ugh!" she cried, shuddering.

"But of course there are plenty of smaller houses much cheaper," Helen added.

"It's an awfully expensive place, New York, isn't it?" said Fanny, with a plaintive glance at Guy.

"Yes, awfully," Helen smiled.

"It makes Ashburnham seem almost attractive, doesn't it?" Fanny went on.

Helen looked up suspiciously. "What do you want to know all these things for?"

"Oh!" Fanny turned away inconsequently. Then she faced her aunt again. "You couldn't possibly live

well on twenty dollars a week, could you?"

"No; not possibly," Helen replied, with a smile.

XVI

WHEN Douglas Briggs returned to the library he wore the cheerful look of a man who has just accomplished a difficult task. "Well, I got those fellows off at last," he said.

"Who were they, Uncle Doug?"

Briggs smiled grimly. "They were gentlemen who are commonly known as heelers. And they called to let me know that I hadn't been quite generous enough to them."

Fanny looked mystified. Her eyes blinked. "How, generous!"

"I hadn't secured enough places for their friends—jobs."

Fanny glanced dolefully at Guy. Then her eyes turned toward her uncle. "It's awful hard to get a job just now, isn't it?" she asked, pathetically.

"Is it?" said Briggs, in a tone of surprise. "Do you know of anybody that wants one?"

"Yes, I do," Fanny replied. "But he's going to get it all right," she added, with confidence.

Briggs extended both hands. "If there's anything I can do—" he said, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"No. I guess you have trouble enough. Oh, yes, you can do something nice—you can let Guy take me out for a drive."

"But I've got a lot of work this morning," Guy protested, with a look in his face that revealed the spirit of the early martyrs.

Briggs had taken his seat at the desk and begun to work again. "Never mind," he said; "it'll keep. The drive'll do you good."

Guy hesitated between pleasure and duty. "Oh, well," he said, glancing from his employer to his employer's niece.

"You come with us, auntie," Fanny urged, with an air that made Guy's coming inevitable.

"No, I mustn't," Helen replied, decidedly. "I have too much to do this morning."

As Fanny turned to the door Michael entered. "Mr. Burrell's in the library, sir," he said to Douglas Briggs. "He didn't want to disturb you till he was sure you weren't busy. His wife is with him, and the young ladies."

"Ugh!" cried Fanny, seizing Guy by the arm. "Let's get out, quick."

Briggs rose. "I'll go in," he said, glancing at Helen with resignation in his tone. "They'll want to see you, too, Helen. I'll bring them in here."

As her husband started to leave the room Helen turned to Michael. "You might bring some of the sherry, Michael. Oh, I forgot—they won't want anything. Never mind. Mr. Briggs will ring if he wants something for Mr. Burrell. Here they are now."

Helen walked forward and received Mrs. Burrell and the three daughters. Mrs. Burrell was dressed with an elaborate adherence to the fashion of the hour, which had the effect of making conspicuous her extreme angularity. Carrie Cora wore a fantastic gown that betrayed fidelity to the local dressmaker. The two younger girls, however, looked charming in their pretty, tailor-made suits. "This is nice," said Helen, offering her hand to Mrs. Burrell. "When did you come to New York?"

"Just got here this morning," Mrs. Burrell replied. "You see we didn't waste any time coming to see you."

"It's that confounded old law business again, Mrs. Briggs," Burrell explained, in his high voice. His spare figure had been almost hidden by his daughters' ample proportions.

"I've done my best for you, Mr. Burrell," Helen explained, smiling.

Mrs. Burrell raised her hand in a gesture of despair. "Father does nothing but talk about that case. I declare I'm sick of hearing about it!"

Burrell gave Helen a meaning look. "Well, I guess she'd be more sick if I was to lose my patents," he said, slowly. "I ain't countin' on goin' to the poor-

house yet awhile. You'd think, by the way Mrs. Burrell talks, a little matter of a hundred thousand dollars wasn't worth fightin' over."

"Does it mean as much as that to you?" asked Douglas Briggs, astonished. He had never been able to adjust himself to the knowledge that the little Congressman, so out of place in Washington, was a man of wealth and, in his own city, of great importance.

"Well, I should think it does, and more, too," Burrell replied. "If a certain friend of mine was to take the case," he went on, smiling at Helen and nodding at her husband, "it would be worth a retainin' fee of five thousand dollars."

Briggs shook his head. "That's a great temptation. I need the money bad enough."

"Well, then, take the case," Burrell exclaimed.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, do take it, Mr. Briggs!" Mrs. Burrell interposed. "Father says if it was only in your hands he wouldn't worry. Then we'd have some peace in the family."

Briggs looked amused. Secretly he enjoyed the flattery of the old lady's words. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take it——"

"Oh, good!" the girls cried, together.

"—if I'm beaten at the next election."

The girls looked at each other with disappointment in their eyes. "Oh!" they said.

Briggs put his hand on Burrell's shoulder. "Can you wait?"

"Well, the case don't come on till December," Burrell replied. "I guess I could wait all right, only they ain't no chance of you gettin' beat."

"Well, I guess we don't want you to be beaten, Mr. Briggs," Mrs. Burrell cried, resentfully. "You're forgettin' your manners, father."

"Oh, that's all right," Briggs exclaimed, patting Burrell on the back. "No harm done, Mrs. Burrell. This husband of yours overrates me, that's all. There are hundreds of men right here in New York who could handle

that case better than I could." He took the old man affectionately by the arm. "Look here, Burrell," he said, confidentially, "don't you think we're in the way of these ladies? They probably have a lot to talk about that they don't want us to hear."

Burrell understood at once. "I was thinkin' of that myself," he replied.

Mrs. Burrell held up three fingers. "Now, father," she cried, "you know how many you've had already."

"My dear lady, don't you be disagreeable," said Briggs, smiling. "I haven't seen your husband for six months."

Mrs. Burrell melted. "Well, just one, father, and put plenty of soda-water in it."

Briggs nodded his acknowledgment of the concession. "There! Come on, Burrell."

As the two men left the room Mrs. Burrell exclaimed: "I declare, Mrs. Briggs, that husband of yours can just twirl me round his little finger."

"Come over here and sit down, Mrs. Burrell," Helen said. "You have something to tell me, haven't you? I can see it in your face."

Mrs. Burrell beamed. "I guess you can see it in Carrie Cora's face. Eh, girls?"

"I should think so!" Emeline and Glady's cried together.

"It's true, then? There is something?" Helen asked. Carrie Cora turned scarlet.

"Yes," Carrie Cora replied, lifting her gloved hand to her forehead.

"Don't be a ninny, Carrie Cora!" Mrs. Burrell exclaimed.

Helen took the girl's hand. "It's all settled?" she asked.

Carrie Cora looked up shyly. "Yes." Then she cast her eyes down again.

"I'm so glad, dear," said Helen, bending forward and kissing her.

"Well, it was you that did it, Mrs. Briggs!" Mrs. Burrell cried, in a loud voice, as if to keep the situation from becoming sentimental. "I might as well give you the credit. That talk-

in' to you gave me that day after your ball just opened my eyes. I suppose I *am* kind of a cross old thing, and—well, I didn't understand Rufus James. The family's always been poor and good-for-nothing. But Rufus, he's got lots of spunk. Why, at first he wouldn't come to the house—even when I said he could. You'd think he was a prince, the way he acted. And he's doin' real well. He's had a raise in his salary, and he ain't lettin' father do a thing for him."

"And is it to be soon?" Helen asked.

"The third of next month," Emeline and Gladys cried together.

"And we want you to come, Mrs. Briggs," said Carrie Cora, recovering from her embarrassment.

"It's going to be a church affair," said Mrs. Burrell, severely, smoothing the front of her dress. This was one of the moments when Mrs. Burrell betrayed that the possession of plenty of money was still novel to her.

"Oh, do come, Mrs. Briggs," Gladys pleaded.

"Yes, please," Emeline echoed.

Helen hesitated. "I don't know whether I can."

"Oh, promise. Please promise," Carrie Cora insisted.

"If I can, I will," Helen replied, feeling ashamed. She knew that her husband would not entertain the notion for an instant.

"And, of course, you'll stay at our house," Mrs. Burrell went on. "We've had a wing built on this Winter. It's just like that wing on yours in Washington."

"And the furniture's just like yours, too," said Carrie Cora. "We got it in Portland. They say it's real antique. Lots of it has come from old houses in Portland and from all kinds of queer places in the country."

Mrs. Burrell looked proudly at her eldest daughter. "Ain't she changed, though?" she said, glancing at Helen. "You'd hardly know her—would you?—the way she's brightened up since Rufus James began to come to the house. Dear me! I used to say to

father that I didn't know what we were goin' to do with her."

Helen smiled at Carrie Cora. "But we've always understood each other, haven't we, dear?"

"Yes, always, Mrs. Briggs," the girl replied.

"And what d'you suppose?" Mrs. Burrell went on. "Rufus James didn't want Carrie Cora to have any trousseau. He said he didn't propose to have people say he was marryin' her because her father had money. Did you ever hear anything like that? Father was so mad! But I must say I kind of liked him for it. But I up and told him I'd attend to all those things myself, an' it was none of his business, anyway. That's what we're here in New York for," she added, lowering her voice as if afraid of being overheard by the men in the other room. "Father didn't let on, but he cares ever so much more about Carrie Cora than for that old law case that he's always talkin' about. It's goin' to be white satin—the weddin' dress—with real Valenceens lace, an' she's goin' to come out in pearl-colored silk." Mrs. Burrell stopped at the sound of steps in the hall. "Oh, here they are back again! It must be almost time for us to be goin'! We've got lots of shoppin' to do."

Douglas Briggs walked over to Carrie Cora. "Well, young lady, I've heard the news," he said. He placed both hands on her hair. "Now, I'm a good deal older than you, and you won't mind," he went on, kissing her between the eyes. "I hope he's worthy of you, my dear."

"I hope I'm worthy of him, Mr. Briggs," Carrie Cora stammered, through her embarrassment. At that moment she looked pretty.

Briggs patted her hand. "My dear child, no man is worth half as much as a nice girl like you."

"Now, don't you go to spoilin' my children, Mr. Briggs," Mrs. Burrell exclaimed, rising. "Come on, father."

Helen rose at the same moment. "But we'll see you again, of course. Come for dinner to-night, won't you?"

The girls looked delighted. "Oh!" they exclaimed.

Mrs. Burrell assumed an expression of severity. "No, we won't. You've got enough on your hands, with all these political people pilin' in on you. I guess I know what it is. We'll come to say good-bye, if we can, to-morrow some time. Father says he's got to get back Thursday."

"But we'd like to have you, really," said Helen, smiling.

Mrs. Burrell remained firm. "No. You're too good. That's the only trouble with you. Well, good-bye."

"You'll come to the wedding, won't you, Mr. Briggs?" said Carrie Cora.

Briggs waved his hand toward Helen. "Ask the lady," he said.

"She said she'd come if she could," Carrie Cora declared.

"Well, I'll come if I can. Good-bye."

He followed them to the door, and he had the air of dismissing them with an almost benign courtesy. When they had disappeared with Helen his face took on an expression of utter weariness. "What a nuisance!" he said to himself. "I sha'n't get a stroke of work done to-day." He sat at his desk and pressed his fingers over his eyes. His little exhibitions of hypocrisy made him very uncomfortable now, chiefly because he knew that his wife took note of them. After a moment he sat upright and nerved himself to go on with his work. But he had not been alone for five minutes when Michael interrupted again.

"The gentlemen that left a few minutes ago have come back, sir."

"They have?" he said, resentfully, as if Michael were to blame. "What do they want?"

"They want to speak to you a minute, sir," the servant replied, in a defensive voice.

Briggs uttered an exclamation of impatience. "Show them in here," he said, looking down at the pile of letters on his desk. Then he stood up and waited for his callers. They came in slowly, as if afraid of treading

on one another's heels; that is, all but one, the youngest and best dressed, a rather handsome fellow of about twenty-eight.

"Well, gentlemen?" Briggs remarked, pleasantly. The look of fatigue and resentment had disappeared from his face. His eye singled out the young fellow, as if expecting him to speak. But it was the oldest of the group, a tall, thin man, with a smooth face and heavy, white hair, who spoke first. He had a deprecating manner, a hoarse voice and a faint brogue.

"We've come back to have another little talk with you, Mr. Briggs," he said.

"All right, Mr. Monahan. Sit down, gentlemen, won't you?" They all glanced at the chairs and remained standing.

"We didn't know just what reply to make to your remarks a few minutes ago till we put our heads together," Monahan continued.

"Well, what decision have you come to?" Briggs asked, cheerfully.

Monahan hesitated. "Well, the fact is——"

The young fellow broke in. "We're not satisfied," he said, fiercely. "We think you ought to make us a more definite promise."

"That's it," Monahan cried, for an instant growing bolder.

They scowled at one another.

Mr. Briggs directed his look toward the young man. "I think I made no promise to you, Mr. Ferris," he said, in a low voice.

"That's just the trouble," Ferris exclaimed. "We worked hard for you last night, and now we don't propose to be put off with any vague talk." His lip curled scornfully and showed fine, white teeth.

"You're a little indefinite yourself, now, Mr. Ferris."

"Well, then, I won't be," Ferris cried. "We nominated and elected you two years ago, and you went back on us."

"How was that?" Briggs said, as if merely curious. His manner seemed to exasperate Ferris.

"You didn't do a thing for us. We asked you for places, and you let them all go to the Civil Service men."

"I had to observe the law," Briggs answered, in the tone he had used before.

"Aw!" Ferris exchanged glances with his companions. "You know just as well as I do that you could have given those places to the men who had worked for you. But we'll say nothing about that just now," he went on, extending his right hand, with the palm turned toward the floor. "That's off. We would have paid you back all right last night if Mr. Stone hadn't promised you'd stand by us. He smoothed it over, as he said you realized your mistake, and all that."

"That's right, he did," Monahan corroborated, huskily.

"He said you told him yourself," cried one of the others, a sallow-faced man with thin, black hair.

"I did? When was that, Mr. Long?"

"Down in Washington," Long replied. "The night you were having a blow-out."

For a moment Douglas Briggs was silent. "I don't remember ever having made such a promise," he replied, thoughtfully.

Ferris laughed bitterly. "Listen to that, will you?"

"I should have no right to make any such promise," Briggs continued. "And I can only repeat what I said a few moments ago. I've pledged myself to support the Civil Service. I told you that last night."

"Oh, what did that amount to?" said Ferris, with disgust.

"That was just a bluff," cried Long.

Briggs smiled. "If you believe that was a bluff, I can't see why you should think my promise worth anything."

"Well, there are five of us here," said Ferris, in a surly tone.

"I see. Witnesses!" Briggs shrugged his shoulders. "I'll tell you what I will do for you. If there are any places that come my way that

aren't covered by the Civil Service, you shall have them."

Ferris looked at Briggs with open contempt. "We might as well tell you, sir, we're not satisfied with the way you've treated us. An' with your record, you've got no right to put on any high an' mighty airs."

Monahan turned to remonstrate with Ferris.

"What do you mean by that?" said Briggs, looking sternly at the young fellow.

Monahan extended his hand toward Briggs. "He's just talkin' a little wind, that's all," he said, bowing and gesticulating. "He don't mean anything. We wanted to let you know how we felt. We didn't quite explain that a few moments ago."

"I understand very well how you gentlemen feel, and I'd help you if I could. I only wish I could make you see that I can't do what's impossible."

Monahan started for the door, followed by the others, one of whom stumbled over a piece of furniture. "Think it over, sir, think it over," he said, bowing and holding his cap in both hands.

"I can promise to do that," Briggs replied.

For several moments after his visitors left Briggs stood motionless at his table. He appreciated the full significance of the opposition to him within his own party. It might mean his defeat. As far back as the previous Spring Stone had foreseen this situation. But he said to himself that he could not have acted differently. He had done his best to serve the party in all legitimate ways; but those heelers cared only for their own selfish interests. Then he realized bitterly that he had made the mistake of trying to play a double game; he had been a straddler. If he had followed a straight course, if he had acted on his convictions, he might now have the satisfaction of feeling that he had been too good for his party. It was chiefly in order to atone to his own conscience for the dishonest work he had done that he had refused to cater to the lower elements of the

party. Now he saw that his scrupulousness was less an expression of honesty than of pride. He was in one of those moods when he judged himself far more harshly than he would have judged another man in his own position; when he lost faith in the sincerity of any of his motives. However, he thought that now he had taken his stand he could maintain it. These fellows would give him a hard fight; but he was ready for it. His resentment was aroused; he returned to his desk with new energy, as if the contest were already begun.

A few minutes later Michael entered with a letter. "Sam just brought this, sir," he said, and left the room.

Briggs glanced at the address and recognized Franklin West's handwriting. He tore open the letter hastily. He had a feeling that it might contain disagreeable news. His eyes ran swiftly over the lines.

Your man has come just as I am leaving for Boston. Sorry I can't go back with him. I came over to New York for only a few hours. But I'll be back in three or four days, when, of course, I shall give myself the pleasure of seeing you. Congratulations on your nomination, if you will accept congratulations on a dead sure thing.

For a moment Briggs had a sensation of chill. It was like a premonition. Was it possible that Franklin West was going back on him, too? But he put the thought aside as absurd. It would not have occurred to him if he were not tired out and if he had not had that interview with the heelers. Still, it was odd that West should have hurried through New York without calling. It would have been simple and natural for him to stop for breakfast at the house where he had so often received hospitality. Still, Briggs thought, philosophically, it was a relief not to be obliged to see him.

For the rest of the morning, however, he felt uncomfortable. At luncheon he had an impulse to speak of West to his wife, but he checked himself.

XVII

Two days later, while Douglas Briggs was smoking his after-dinner cigar in the library and chatting with Fanny Wallace, whose presence in the house greatly relieved the embarrassment of his strained relations with his wife, Michael entered and announced Mr. Farley. "There are two gentlemen with him, sir," said Michael, "Mr. De Witt and Mr. Saunders."

Briggs flushed. "Ah!" he said, as if the callers had suddenly assumed importance in his eyes.

"Where are they?" he asked, rising hastily.

"In the study, sir."

"All right. I'll go in."

"Give my love to that nice Mr. Farley," Fanny called after him.

As Briggs entered the room Farley rose with the boyish embarrassment of manner that years of newspaper work had not changed. He introduced his friends. De Witt, a tall, slim young man, with a sweeping brown mustache and a long, well-cut face, took his host's hand smilingly. Saunders, shorter, smooth-faced and keen-eyed, glanced at Briggs with a look not altogether free from suspicion. In Saunders Briggs recognized a type of political reformer that always made him nervous.

"De Witt and Saunders are of the Citizens' Club," Farley explained. "In fact, we're all of the Citizen's Club," he added, with the air of making a joke.

"I'm very glad to see you, gentlemen. Won't you sit down? I caught a glimpse of you at the reporters' table at the caucus the other night, Farley."

"Hot time, wasn't it?"

Briggs took from the table a box of cigars, which he offered his callers. De Witt and Saunders shook their heads and mumbled thanks. Farley took a cigar and smoked with his host.

"Well, Congressman," said Farley, "we haven't come merely to take up your time."

Briggs smiled and nodded.

"We've come to ask you some questions," Farley continued.

"You always were great on questions, Farley," said Briggs, with a laugh.

"We've been having a racket over you down at the Citizens' Club," Farley began, and Briggs glanced smilingly at De Witt and Saunders.

"Farley has made the racket," Saunders interposed.

"I've been trying to persuade those fellows that you're a much misunderstood man," said Farley, his manner growing more earnest.

"So we've come here to try to understand you, Congressman," De Witt explained, amiably.

Douglas Briggs continued to look amused. "Anything I can do, gentlemen," he said, with an encouraging gesture.

"I know I needn't tell you that I've always believed in you, Congressman," Farley remarked.

"You've been a good friend, Farley. I've always appreciated that."

Farley leaned back in his chair. "The fellows have been—well, bothered by those stories the papers have been publishing about you. It's because they don't know you. They don't know, as I do, that you're incapable of any dirty work."

"Thank you, Farley," said Briggs, in a low voice.

"Well, matters came to a head last night at the club when we talked over your renomination. To be perfectly frank, a good many of our men thought Williams was going to get the nomination, and, if he had got it, we were going to make him our candidate, too."

Douglas Briggs laughed. "You are frank, Farley. So, now that I have the nomination, you're all at sea. Is that the idea?"

"We can't stand the opposition candidate!" said De Witt.

Saunders shook his head. "No; Bruce is too much for our stomachs. He's out of the question altogether."

"So we'll have to choose between endorsing you or putting up a candi-

date of our own," Farley went on. "In fact, that is what most of the men want to do."

"You want to help to elect Bruce, you mean?" said Briggs, pleasantly.

"That's what it would amount to," De Witt acknowledged.

Briggs hesitated. "Gentlemen, you are placing me in a very delicate position," he said at last. "What can I do?"

"You can give my friends here some assurances, Congressman," said Farley.

"What assurances?"

"In the first place, you can give us your word that those stories in the opposition papers are false."

Briggs rose slowly from his seat. His face grew pale. After a long silence, he said: "Farley, do you remember what I said to you last Spring, when you asked me to deny those stories? I said they were too contemptible to be noticed!"

Farley looked disappointed. "Then you won't help us? You won't help me in the fight I've been making for you?"

"Gentlemen," Douglas Briggs went on, speaking slowly and impressively, "I know perfectly well what you are driving at, and I'm going to try to meet you halfway. But I'm a man as well as a politician, and you can't blame me if I resent being placed on the rack like a criminal. However, I appreciate your motives in coming here, and I'm grateful to Farley for all he's done for me. Let me say this, once for all: If I am elected I shall go back to Congress with clean hands and with a clear conscience, ready to do my duty wherever I see it. Within the past few months my relations with Franklin West have been the subject of newspaper talk. West has been my personal friend. I have trusted him and respected him. Lately I have discovered that he is a scoundrel. He is coming here this morning, and I shall give myself the pleasure of telling him so. Now, gentlemen, if you honor me with an endorsement, I pledge my word that you will find me

in perfect sympathy with the work you're doing." He stopped; his lips tightened. "I confess that I should not have the courage to say these things, to humble myself like this, but for this good friend here. I only wish there were more like him."

Farley smiled. "Well, Congressman, I knew you'd see through that fellow some day."

"Now, gentlemen, you have asked me for some assurances," Douglas Briggs continued. "I might as well tell you frankly that I can only give you the assurance of my good faith, of my honesty of intention. I've made blunders in my career so far that I shall regret to my dying day. I've been the target of the sensational newspapers; but I don't mind that. Many of the stories printed about me, I can honestly say, have been absolute calumnies. Some of the censure has been deserved. I suppose that the lesson of politics can't be learned in a day. At any rate, it has taken me several bitter years to learn it, and I'm not sure that I've learned it all yet. But no matter how great my mistakes have been, in my heart I've always been in sympathy with clean politics. You know as well as I do that for the past few years I've been getting farther and farther away from my party. The other night I secured my nomination in the teeth of pretty strenuous opposition. Just now I have reason to believe that in the coming campaign I shall have to meet as enemies men who have been my strongest friends. As you probably know, a good many of my East Side supporters have gone back on me. This means a big loss. Even with the strength you might give me, my election would be doubtful. So, if you support me, you'll gain very little for yourselves, I can tell you that. We might as well look the situation in the face, you know."

"Well, sir, the more enemies you make among the machine men the more willing we are to stand by you, Congressman," said Farley. "The harder the fight the better we like it."

"That's very consoling, Farley.

Only you fellows had better go slow before you decide to try to whitewash me. To tell the truth, I don't feel quite fit for your company. I'm not good enough for you. I've been a good deal of a machine man myself, you know."

Farley laughed. "That's all right. We haven't any objections to the machine. We only object to the men who are running it just at present."

"I don't think it's necessary to keep you on the rack any longer," said De Witt, rising. The others rose too.

"Thank you," said Briggs, with a smile. "Will any of you gentlemen have a—? I always hesitate in asking any members of the Citizens' Club."

"No, thank you," said Saunders; "too early in the morning." The others shook their heads.

"You'll probably hear from us before long," said Farley, at the door.

XVIII

THE next morning after breakfast Helen Briggs followed her husband into the study. "I want to speak to you, Douglas," she said.

"Well?" He looked embarrassed, as he always did now on finding himself alone with her.

"It's about the house," she went on. "Have you done anything about renting it this Winter?"

"No," he replied, betraying a little impatience. "I've had other things to think about. Besides, I shall be over here now and then."

"But it would hardly pay to keep the house open for that," she insisted, gently. "Besides, it would be gloomy for you here—"

"Alone?" he said, sharply, looking up at her. "Yes," he repeated, drily; "it would be lonely." He lifted his hand to his head. "I suppose you're right about that," he sighed. "I'll speak to an agent tomorrow. We can doubtless rent it furnished. Still, it's a little late in the season," he concluded, vaguely.

"I shall want to have some of our things sent to Waverly," she said.

"I thought I would begin to get them together to-day."

"Oh, don't begin to break up till we're ready to get out of here!" he exclaimed. "Wait till after the election. Besides, I expect Franklin West over in a few days, and I don't want him to come into an empty house." He was glad of the chance to mention West's coming in this indirect way. He kept his eyes turned from his wife.

After a moment of silence she said, in a low voice: "He is coming here?"

He gave her a quick glance. "Yes; why not?"

She moved slightly, but she did not answer. She grew slightly paler.

"I know you don't like him," he went on, angry with himself for taking an apologetic attitude, "but surely you won't object to his staying here a day or two. You've never objected before."

"I didn't know him then as I do now," she said.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked, angrily. Then, when he saw that she had no reply to make, he went on, in a more conciliatory tone: "It will be impossible for me to avoid asking him. You know perfectly well——"

The blood had rushed to her face. "If he comes, Douglas," she said, "I can't stay here."

He walked swiftly toward her and rested his hand on one of the chairs. His eyes shone. "I've stood enough of this behavior from you, Helen, and now I'm going to put my foot down. You sha'n't stir out of this house. You'll stay here, and you'll receive Franklin West as you receive all my other friends. He knows you're here, and I don't propose to allow him to be insulted by your leaving. Do you understand?"

Helen bowed. "Perfectly," she said, in a whisper.

"Then you'll do as I say?"

"No," she replied, quietly; "I'll go. I'll leave this very morning."

"Then if you leave," he said, "you'll leave for good."

"As you please." Helen turned

and walked slowly toward the door. He watched her angrily. As she opened the door she leaned against it heavily and caught her breath in a sob.

He stepped forward quickly and took her in his arms. "Helen," he cried, brokenly, "I didn't mean that! I didn't know what I was saying! It's because I love you that I'm so harsh with you. Can't you see I've been in hell ever since this trouble began? Everything I've done has been done for you. I've made mistakes. I've done wrong. But God knows I want to get out of it; and I will get out of it, if you'll only have patience. I hate that man West as much as you do. But I can't throw him down now. It would mean ruin for me. Only listen to reason, won't you? Besides, you haven't anything against West. Hasn't he always treated you civilly?" He hesitated, watching the tears that ran down her cheeks. "Well, hasn't he? Answer me, Helen."

She drew herself away from him. She had a sudden temptation to tell him the whole truth. It seemed for an instant as if this avowal might clear up the whole trouble between them. Then she thought of what the other consequences might be, and she checked herself. "I can't tell you, Douglas. You mustn't ask me to meet him again. I can't look him in the face. The mere sight of him makes me creep."

He looked helplessly at her, thinking that he understood the full meaning of her words. Then he turned away. "I never thought I should drag you into this, Helen," he said, bitterly. "I—I don't blame you. Of course, I know it is all my fault."

"Then why not undo this fault?" she cried. "Why not——?"

He held out his hand despairingly. "Don't!" he exclaimed. "You don't understand. You can't. You women never can."

She dried her eyes and was about to leave the room. "Since you are determined not to have him here," her husband remarked, with a resumption of reproach in his tone,

"I'll not ask him to stay. I'll offer some excuse."

During the rest of the day they did not refer to West again. The next morning Briggs looked for a letter from him from Boston, but none came.

Two days later he received a brief note that West had dictated to his stenographer in Washington. Pressing business had called him home; he had not even stopped over in New York. So that scene with Helen might have been avoided, after all, Briggs thought, with a sigh. He tried to forget about the episode, however, and during the next few days the pressure of campaign work absorbed him. The Citizens' Club had endorsed his candidacy, and their support, he believed, would more than counterbalance the opposition within his own party. During the day he either received the crowds of importunate visitors, chiefly constituents with axes to grind, who seemed to think his time belonged to them, or he was working up the speeches that he was to deliver at night. He had long before ceased to write out what he intended to say; a few notes written on a card gave him all the clues he needed. He spent considerable time, however, in poring over statistics and over newspapers, from which he culled most of his material.

One morning, about two weeks before the election was to be held, Michael appeared in the library with a card and the announcement that the lady was waiting in the reception room.

"Miss Wing!" said Briggs, absently. "Where have I seen that name? What can she want with me?" Then his face lighted up. "Oh, yes, I remember." He looked serious again. "Why should she come here, to take up my time? I don't believe I—Well, show her in, Michael," he said, impatiently.

Miss Wing wore one of her most extravagant frocks. When Douglas Briggs offered his hand and greeted her, her face grew radiant.

"How good of you to remember

me, Congressman. But then it's part of your business to remember people, isn't it?" she said, archly.

"It's pretty hard work sometimes; but I remember you perfectly."

"That's very flattering, I'm sure." Miss Wing sank into the seat Briggs had placed for her. "Well, Congressman, I've come on a disagreeable errand."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Briggs, with a smile.

"But with the best intentions in the world," Miss Wing hastened to explain.

"That makes it all right, then."

"It's about— Well, I suppose I might come to the point at once. It's connected with the Transcontinental Railway."

"M'm! Aren't your readers tired of hearing about that?"

Miss Wing shook her head. "Not when there are new and exciting developments," she said, insinuatingly.

"Such as what?"

Miss Wing waited for a moment. "Well, thus far the papers have spared Mrs. Briggs."

"Mrs. Briggs? What has Mrs. Briggs to do with that matter?" In spite of his effort to keep his self-control, Douglas Briggs betrayed anger in his voice.

"Simply this," Miss Wing went on, coolly. "I warn you it's very unpleasant. But I—I consider it my duty to tell you."

"Go ahead, then."

Miss Wing fell into a dramatic attitude, her right hand extended and resting on her parasol. "I happen to know that Mr. Franklin West has taken advantage of his hold on you to make love to your wife."

Briggs rose from his seat. "This is the worst yet," he said, in a low voice.

Miss Wing lifted her eyebrows. "You don't believe it?"

"Of course I don't," he replied, contemptuously.

"But I saw him with my own eyes. You're still incredulous, aren't you? It was the night of your ball in Washington. Mr. West was with

Mrs. Briggs in the library. I saw him threaten her, and I saw that she was frightened. Knowing your relations—excuse me, but I must be frank—knowing your relations, it wasn't hard for me to understand what he was saying."

Briggs looked angrily at his visitor. "Why have you come to me with this vile story?" he cried.

Miss Wing met his looks without flinching. "In the first place, because I thought you ought to know it."

"That was why you waited for six months to tell me?" he said, scornfully.

"No. I waited because of my second reason. I knew that if you were nominated again the information would be more valuable to me. There!"

"How, more valuable?"

"You public men are so dull at times! It's simply that I—well, I don't want to publish the story, though it is a beautiful story. It's not only a splendid sensation, but it's a touch of romance in your stupid politics."

"You want me to pay you not to publish the story. Is that it?"

Miss Wing grew serious. "Exactly!"

Briggs smiled coldly. "Well, you've come to the wrong man. I've done a good many things in my career that I regret, but I've never yet submitted to blackmail."

"That's a hard word, Mr. Briggs." Miss Wing glared at Briggs, but he made no comment. "You prefer, then, to have your wife's name disgraced, perhaps?" she said.

"I tell you the whole story is a lie!"

"You believe that I've made it up, do you?"

Briggs laughed contemptuously. "Put any construction on my words that you please," and he jammed his hand over the bell on the table beside him. "But let me tell you this, once for all: Not to protect my wife or myself will I be cajoled into paying one cent. Publish your article. Do all the mischief you can!"

Miss Wing rose indignantly "I'll

queer your election for you!" she cried, as Michael entered.

"Show this lady out, Michael," said Briggs, quietly.

XIX

FOR the next ten minutes Douglas Briggs paced his study. He kept repeating to himself that what that woman had said was impossible; she had come simply to blackmail him; she had supposed him to be an easy mark. But it was strange that Helen's discovery of his relations with West should have followed so closely after the night of the ball in Washington. Could West have been so cowardly as to expose him to her? It flashed upon Briggs that on the very morning after the ball he had found Helen reading his scrapbooks. Why had she done that? What had been a merely commonplace incident now seemed full of significance. Was she searching those files for support of West's charges? The idea seemed too hideous, too monstrous. For a moment Briggs had a sensation of having been accused of a crime of which he was innocent. Then he called himself a fool. West had very little respect for women, but he was altogether too experienced, too much a man of the world, to insult a woman like Helen.

The only sensible course to pursue was to ignore Miss Wing altogether. If she started the story about him it would merely add one more to the scandals already in circulation. Thus far they did not appear to hurt him much. The chances were, however, that the woman would not dare to carry out her threat. Besides, Briggs thought with satisfaction, the increased severity of the libel laws was making newspapers more careful of what they said, even about men running for office. He was himself used to hearing similar stories about his colleagues in Washington, and he paid little attention to them. As for Helen, he decided that he would not degrade his wife even by mentioning the matter to her. He returned to

his work, however, with bitterness in his mind, and when, an hour later, Helen entered the room, he looked up quickly and said:

"Oh, there's something I want to ask you."

He dropped his pen and scanned her face, letting his chin rest on his hands. "Why is it that you were so dead set against having Franklin West come here the other day?"

She waited, as if carefully preparing an answer. "I would rather not speak of that again, Douglas," she said.

"But I want to speak of it," he insisted. "And I want you to speak of it in plain language. You needn't be afraid of wounding me. Was it because of my connection with him in that railroad business?"

He saw her face flush. Her hand twitched at her belt. "I never liked him," she said. "I told you that."

"Oh!" he cried, impatiently, "this isn't a question of your liking him or disliking him. You dislike a good many people." She looked at him reproachfully. "You know perfectly well you do, even if you don't say so. Don't you suppose I can tell?" He felt suddenly ashamed, and checked himself. "Excuse me, dear," he said; "I didn't mean to be disagreeable; but I want you to be open with me in this matter. What's your reason for saying you'd leave here if he came to stay?"

"Don't, Douglas!" Helen's eyes filled with tears. "Please don't ask me. It's better that you shouldn't. I've tried, oh, I've——"

"There *is* a reason, then," he declared, with grim triumph. "Now, I'm going to find out what it is," he added, with quiet determination.

She sank hopelessly to the couch. He leaned forward and kept his eyes fixed on her. "Well," he said, "I'm waiting."

"The last time he was at our house in Washington he—he insulted me."

Briggs started back, as if someone had aimed a blow at him. "He insulted you?" he cried, incredulously. "This must be some fancy of yours.

West is the most courteous, the most suave—he's *too* suave. What did he say?"

"He told me that he was in love with me, that he'd been in love with me for years. He said that was why he'd helped you so much. When I tried to call the servants he said they were his servants, in his pay, that you were in his pay—" Helen dropped her head on the couch. Her figure shook.

Her husband looked at her, dazed. "The scoundrel!" he said, under his breath.

"Perhaps now you can understand why I loathe him so. I always knew what he was. I've always been afraid of him."

Briggs grew suddenly angry. "Why didn't you speak of this before? Why didn't you?" He clasped his hands over his face. "God!"

"I couldn't. He said it would ruin you."

"Ruin me!" Briggs repeated, savagely. Then he looked pityingly at his wife. "And you've kept silent all these months just to protect me?" He turned away. "I might have known what this life would lead to," he went on, as if speaking to himself. "I've dragged myself through the gutter, and I've dragged my family with me."

Helen rose from the couch.

"You ought to have told me," he went on, this time without reproach. "That would have been the only fair thing to do. But it isn't too late," he concluded, grimly.

A look of terror appeared in her face. "What do you mean, Douglas?"

"Oh, I don't mean that I intend to kill him," he replied, with a scorn that was plainly directed against himself. "We can get along without any heroics."

"What—?" She looked at him with the helplessness of a woman in such a situation. Then she walked toward him. "Please let it all go, Douglas," she said. "No harm has been done to me, I mean. Don't, don't——"

"Don't make a scandal? No, I won't. I promise you that. You've suffered enough out of this thing." He had an impulse to go forward and kiss her, but a fear of appearing too spectacular checked him. He had the Anglo-Saxon's horror of acting up to a situation. Besides, in her manner there was something that stung his pride. He could more easily have borne reproaches.

When she had left the room he asked himself what he could do. He felt as helpless as his wife had been a few moments before. Of course, he would break with West; but this contingency did not affect the real question between them. He might thrash the fellow; but even that would be a poor satisfaction. He clearly saw that in this matter there could be no such thing for him as satisfaction. He alone was to blame; he had brought the shame on himself by introducing to his wife a man for whom no honest man or woman could feel respect. He must take his medicine, bitter as it was.

It grew more bitter as the days passed and he did nothing. West, he felt sure, would never enter his house again. When they did meet it would be in Washington, where he would let the fellow know that their business deals were at an end. There was no reason why they should not end now; he had done the work, and he had received his pay, he thought, with self-disgust. In future he should keep himself out of any such complications. West had taught him a lesson that would keep him straight for the rest of his life.

Two days before the election Michael announced a visitor. When Douglas Briggs heard the name the expression of his face changed so completely that it found a reflection in Michael's face.

"Where is he?" Briggs asked.

"In the drawing-room, sir. Shall I ask him to step in here?"

"No." Briggs adjusted the collar of his coat. "I'll go in there," he said.

As he was about to leave the room he met his wife, entering from the hall. She looked as if she were about to faint. "I saw him as I came down the stairs," she said. She laid her hand on her husband's shoulder. "Douglas, you won't be foolish, will you?"

He drew her hand away. She noticed that his arm was quivering. "Don't be afraid," he replied, impatiently. "I'll make short work of him, and there'll be no scene. Think of his coming here!" he added, with a laugh.

She followed him into the hall. When he entered the drawing-room he closed the door behind him. West was standing in front of the mantel; he wore a long frock coat, and a pair of yellow gloves hung from one hand. On seeing Briggs he came forward, smiling, and offering his hand.

"Glad to catch you in," he said. "I came over in a tremendous hurry. I——"

He stopped. Briggs stood in front of him, looking him sharply in the face, with hands clasped behind his back.

"West!"

Franklin West let his hand drop. His eyes showed astonishment. "What's the matter?" he gasped.

Briggs went on, in a lower voice: "West, I have something to say to you, and I might as well say it without any preliminaries. I want to tell you that you're a blackguard."

"What!" West exclaimed.

"I have heard from my wife how you insulted her at our house last Spring."

"Insulted her? It's—it's a mistake. I never——"

Briggs drew nearer West. He looked dangerous. "No. There's no mistake. My wife isn't in the habit of lying. Now, I have just one thing to say to you. That is, get out of here. Don't ever show yourself in my house again. If you do, by God, you'll pay for it!"

West had recovered from his bewilderment. "You must be crazy!" he said.

"I shall be if you don't take yourself out of my sight pretty quick."

"You mean to throw me over, then?"

"Yes, you and your whole gang. I've had enough of you. You thought you owned me, didn't you?"

West did not flinch. "It's war between us, then, is it?" he said.

"Call it what you please, but get out!"

West smiled. "Very well, then. I think we understand each other. Now that you've got your nomination again you believe you're strong enough to stand up against us. After we've made you, you're going to knife us. And you make your wife the cloak, the pretext—just as you've used her all along!"

Douglas seized West by the throat and hurled him to the floor.

The door opened, and Helen stood on the threshold. "Douglas!" she cried.

Briggs released his hold and stood up. "Excuse me," he said, glancing at his wife. "I forgot myself." He glanced at the prostrate figure. "Get out!"

West rose, his face red with anger. He walked slowly toward the door. Then he turned. "You'll pay for this!" he said.

XX

On the night of the election Farley stood at the telephone in Douglas Briggs's library. "Oh, hello! hello!" he called. "Yes, this is Mr. Briggs's house. Yes, Congressman Briggs. What?" He glanced at Guy, who sat at the table in the centre of the room. "They've shut me off!" he said, disgusted. He rang impatiently. Then he rang again. "Hello! Is this Central? Well, I want Central. Who are you? No, I rang off long ago. Well then, ring off, can't you?" He turned toward Guy. "Damn that girl!" Then an exclamation in the telephone caused him to say, hastily, "Oh, excuse me." He smiled at Guy. "Telephones are corrupting things,

aren't they? What?" he continued, with his lips at the transmitter. "What's that about manners? Oh, I never had any? Excuse me, but I'm nervous. Yes, nervous. Well, give me the number, won't you? 9-0-7 Spring. Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought you were Central." He turned from the transmitter. "I've offended her again. What? Yes. Well, excuse me, please. Well, I'll try. Thank you. Thank heaven, she's rung off! Women ought never to be allowed to get near telephones." He rang again. "Is this Central? Oh, yes, thanks, 9-0-7 Spring, please. Now for a wait!" He leaned weakly against the wall.

Guy rose quickly. "Here, let me hold it for you awhile. You take a rest."

"Thanks." Farley sank into Guy's chair. "I've spent most of the day at that 'phone," he said, with a long sigh.

"Yes, waiting," Guy was saying. "Eh? What a very fresh young person that is, Farley. Yes," he exclaimed, snappishly, "9-0-7. Yes," he repeated, loudly, "Spring. Who do you want, Farley?"

Farley stood up. "Give it to me." As Guy returned to his seat, Farley cried: "Hello! Is Harlowe there? Yes, J. B. Harlowe, your political man. Well, ask him to come to the 'phone. Just listen to the hum of that office, will you?" he said, dreamily. "I can hear the old ticker going tick, tick, tick, tick, tick. The boys must be hustling to-night."

Guy, who had taken his place at the desk again, rested his head on both hands. "You love newspaper work, don't you, Farley?"

"I love it and I hate it. I wish I'd never gone into it, and I couldn't be happy out of it. It's got into my blood, I suppose. They say it always does if you stay in it long enough. I—Oh, hello, Harlowe! Well, how goes it? Any returns down there? We haven't heard a word for an hour. Pretty quiet? Yes, this is just the time! What district? 235? Good! Funny we don't hear. Oh, yes; just come in. We'll

get it by messenger, I suppose. We're ahead by 235 in the Ninth District, Guy. What's that?" Farley listened intently. "Well, I can tell you this—you'll waste your time if you send a man up here. Congressman Briggs is asleep at this minute, and we don't propose to wake him up. He's nearly dead. He's been rushing it without a break since the campaign opened. Seven speeches last night! Think of that! Eh? No, we don't propose to deny the story. We've had a string of reporters here all day long, and we've steered them all off. They haven't even seen Briggs." He burst out laughing. Then he suddenly became sober. "All right, that's the way to talk to 'em. Call me up if you get anything important."

"What story?" Guy asked, when Farley had rung off.

"That nasty lie published in the *Chronicle* this morning," Farley replied, dropping into a big chair near the desk.

"Mrs. Briggs hasn't seen it yet," said Guy. "I hope she won't hear anything while she's dining down at the hotel. I told Fanny and her father to be careful."

Farley sighed. "Well, I suppose she must find out some time. You know, down in Washington they've connected her name with that fellow West's for a long time."

"You could see from the way she acted whenever he was around that she hated him," said Guy, with disgust in his voice.

"Oh, they'll say anything about a woman as soon as she becomes conspicuous," Farley replied, with the older man's philosophy.

"But weren't they clever to spring that story on the very day of the election?" Guy went on. "Look here. See what the *Evening Signal* says:

"There is no doubt that the sensational story published in the morning papers that Congressman Briggs has had a split with his former backer because of an alleged insult to his wife, and was using the Citizens' Club as a catspaw, has cost him thousands of votes. The reference

to Mrs. Briggs may be set down as pure falsehood, introduced to give romantic color to the story. But there is no doubt that personal reasons of considerable interest led Congressman Briggs to seek support of the very men who, till the present campaign, had been his bitterest opponents."

Farley's eyes flashed. "That's a damn lie!"

"Of course it is," Guy exclaimed. "But I only hope all the men at the Citizens' Club will think so."

The door was thrown open, and Briggs entered. His face was pale, his eyes looked inflamed. "Well, boys, how are things going?"

"You got up too soon," Farley replied. "Everything's quiet."

"No news?"

"The Ninth District has gone for you by 235," said Farley.

Briggs lifted his eyebrows. "Two thirty-five? Is that all? I thought we were sure of five hundred at least. Oh, well!"

"Things ought to begin to hum soon," said Guy, rising to give up the seat at the desk. As Briggs took the chair, Michael appeared at the door.

"There's a messenger outside with a letter, sir. He says he was told to give it to you yourself, and to wait for an answer."

"Tell him to come in. You'd better take a rest, Farley," said Briggs. "Don't you newspaper men ever get tired?"

Farley smiled. "Not when there's a little excitement in the air."

A moment later a messenger followed Michael into the room. He was a man of nearly forty, and his uniform gave him an air of youth that his deeply lined face and his figure denied. He looked about aimlessly.

"Congressman Briggs?" he said.

"Yes." Briggs extended his hand.

"Hello! from the Citizens' Club," he exclaimed, as he looked at the envelope. "What's this?" He glanced over the letter. "It's from Griswold. Listen to this, will you? 'We have been talking over that outrageous

libel about you that appeared in the *Chronicle* this morning, and we think that you ought to take some notice of it. It is too serious to be passed over. We hear that it also appeared in the papers in Boston, Chicago and Washington.' Here, you read the rest, Farley."

Farley read, with Guy looking over his shoulder. When he had finished, he passed the letter back to Briggs. No one spoke.

At last Farley glanced at the uniformed figure. "The messenger is waiting," he said to Briggs.

Briggs swung in his chair and faced the desk. "Sit down here, Guy, and write what I dictate. 'Frazer Griswold, Esquire, the Citizens' Club, Fifth Avenue, New York: My Dear Griswold—I see nothing in the article you mention that requires a reply. If I knew the writer, I'd pay him the compliment of thrashing him within an inch of his life.' Give that to Miss Mitchell. Get her to run it off on the typewriter, and I'll sign it."

"Respectfully yours?" Guy asked, busily writing.

Douglas Briggs smiled faintly. "Yes, very respectfully."

As Guy left the room, Farley asked: "Any idea who did it, Mr. Briggs? Someone down in Washington, of course."

"I think I know who did it," Briggs replied, quietly.

"Who?"

"No one we can get at."

"A woman?"

Briggs ran his fingers through his hair. He took a long breath. "Yes," he said, wearily; "don't you remember Miss Wing? She was at my wife's ball last Spring."

"Yes," Farley replied. "She was disgruntled because she'd been put into a side room for supper with the rest of us newspaper people. Can that have been the reason?"

"No; she had a better reason. But that supper arrangement was a blunder, wasn't it? I've heard that a dozen times since. And Mrs. Briggs and I knew nothing about it till the supper was all over."

"But she was a friend of West's," Farley went on. "He came to her rescue at the ball, I remember. He used to put himself out to do her favors."

"Yes, it's one of his principles to be particularly civil to newspaper people. I've often heard him say that. But she's gone back on him. She throws him down as hard in this article as she does me. Oh, well," Briggs added, stretching out his arms, "I sometimes think that these things, instead of hurting a man, really do him good."

"That's pretty cynical, isn't it?" said Farley, smiling. "It's a little hard on the rest of us in the newspaper line, too."

Briggs rose and began to pace the room. "Oh, I'm out of sorts now, Farley. Don't mind what I say. Have you fellows had anything to eat?" he asked, stopping suddenly.

"We had something brought in," said Guy, returning with the typewritten letter. "Didn't have time to go out. Will you sign this?"

"Don't you think you'd better get something?" Farley asked.

Douglas Briggs let the pen fall from his fingers. "No, I have no appetite." Guy gave the messenger the letter and followed him out of the room. "We're helter-skelter here now, aren't we? Well, to-morrow will be our last day in this old place."

"You're giving it up for good, then?" Farley asked.

"Yes, if we can get rid of it. But we haven't had an offer for it yet. Too bad!" he added, with a sigh.

Farley looked surprised. "Then you don't want to go?"

Douglas Briggs hesitated. "Some of the happiest days of my life have been spent here," he said at last; "and some of the unhappiest, too," he added, turning his head away. "When I came into this house I felt I had reached success. What fools we all are! Here I've been working for years among big interests, and what thought do you suppose has been in my mind all the

time? To please my wife, to get money to surround her with beautiful things, to place her in a beautiful house, to give her beautiful dresses to wear. Bah!"

"Well, that isn't altogether a bad ambition," said Farley, cheerfully.

Briggs looked up quickly. "When you've got a wife who's above all these fripperies! Isn't it?"

"But I always think of you as one of the happiest married men I know," said Farley. He began to glance over some papers he had taken from the desk.

"I ought to be. I should be if I weren't a fool."

They heard a voice in the hall and the sound of a girl's laughter. Briggs stopped speaking and listened. A moment later Fanny Wallace ran in, followed by her aunt, her father and Guy Fullerton.

"Here we are at last!" said Fanny. "Missed us?" she went on, and gave her uncle a kiss on the chin. "Oh, we've had the loveliest dinner! Terrapin and mushrooms and venison and—you should have seen dad when he looked over the bill! Now, aren't you sorry you didn't come?" she asked, turning to Guy.

"I was very sorry before you went," Guy replied.

"What did *you* have, Uncle Doug?"

"I didn't have anything."

"What?" Fanny stood still.

"But I told Martha to have some dinner for you," Helen interposed, as she was about to unpin her hat.

"I told her that I was going out, but I fell asleep."

"I'll see about something." Helen Briggs removed her hat and pinned her veil on it.

Briggs shook his head. "No. I couldn't eat now," he said, with a scowl of exhaustion.

Helen looked alarmed. "Aren't you well?" she asked.

"Perfectly. Don't worry about me. I'll take a biscuit and a glass of wine if I need anything. And if I'm elected we'll all go out and blow ourselves to a supper."

Fanny's eyes shone. "At the Wal-

dorf-Astoria? Good! We'll have some lobster Newburg."

Jonathan Wallace was drawing off his thick gloves. "Well, everything looks cheerful for you, they say," he remarked to Briggs. "I met Harris, that political friend of yours, and he told me you were going to have a big majority."

"Oh, Harris always was an optimist," said Briggs.

"And dad made him furious," Fanny cried. "He told him that every time a friend of his went into politics he felt like saying, 'There's another good man gone wrong!' and he said that if you got completely snowed under it would be the best thing that could happen to you."

Briggs smiled. "And what did Harris say to that?"

"He didn't say anything. He just looked. Well, I'm going down stairs to see if I can't get something to eat for this gentleman. I'm going to make him eat something. Think of his going without any dinner while we were gorging! Want to come and help, Guy?"

"Take too long."

Fanny looked injured. "Why, there isn't anything for you to do here."

"Well, there will be soon," Guy replied.

"Then Uncle Doug can send for you—or Mr. Farley." Fanny seized Guy by the shoulders and pushed him out of the room. "Won't you, Mr. Farley?" she cried, from the hall.

"All right," Farley replied, smiling.

"I think I'll go up and take a nap," said Wallace. "This New York pace is a little too much for me."

As Helen busied herself about the room the telephone rang. Farley responded. "Hello!" he cried. "Who is it? Citizens' Club? All right. I'll wait. Oh, hello, Gilchrist! Yes, this is Mr. Briggs's house. We've sent the reply by messenger. He says the libel isn't worth replying to. I might have told you that." He listened for a few moments. Then he turned to Briggs. "Great excitement over that matter

down at the club. They want me to come down."

"Go along, then."

"All right. I'll be down in fifteen minutes," said Farley, into the telephone. As he hung up the receiver he remarked: "I'll make short work of them. Good-night, Mrs. Briggs," he called from the hall. "I'll see you soon again, though. Perhaps I'll bring you news of your husband's election."

XXI

HELEN gathered the wraps she had thrown on the couch and started to leave the room. When she stood at the door her husband said:

"Are you going up stairs?"

"Yes; I'm tired," she replied, without looking round. She stood, however, as if expecting him to speak again.

"You—you won't wait till the returns come in?"

She turned slightly. "I'll come down again," she replied, glancing at him for an instant.

Briggs walked toward her. "We've been such strangers in the past few weeks," he said, gently, "that I should think you might take advantage of this chance of a chat."

Helen dropped her wraps on a chair. "I will stay if you wish."

"If I wish!" he repeated. "I thought perhaps you'd like to stay. You do everything nowadays with the air of a martyr, Helen," he concluded, with the air of making a joke and losing faith in it before it had been finished.

"I sha'n't trouble you much longer, Douglas," she said, lowering her eyes.

"Then there is no way of our coming to an understanding?"

She kept her eyes from him. "We understand each other very well now, I think."

"Now?" he repeated, acridly. Helen started to take up the wraps again. He held out his hand. "Wait a minute. I didn't detain you to pick a quarrel. I wanted to make one last appeal to you."

"For what?" she asked.

"I can't stand living like this any longer," he went on, desperately, throwing off all self-restraint. "I can't stand the thought of going back to Washington without you. I'm lonely. I've been lonely for months. You know that as well as I do."

She hesitated, trying to control herself. Then she said, without a trace of feeling in her voice: "You have your work. You have as much as I have."

"You treat me as if you had no regard, no respect, for me. You make me feel like a criminal. I thought when I threw that man West over——"

She looked him straight in the face. "But why did you do it? Not because he was what you knew him to be, but because he had insulted me. That's what I can't forget. All these years you knew what he was."

They stood looking at each other. "And I was just as bad as he was," he said, in a low voice. "You mean that, don't you?"

Helen turned away. "I didn't say that."

"And is there nothing I can do to make things right between us?"

"Perhaps, in time, I shall feel different, Douglas."

He smiled bitterly. "I hope that God isn't as merciless as good women are!" he said.

She showed resentment at once. "I am not merciless, but I can't go back to that place to be pointed at, as I should be—to have my name connected with that man's—" Her voice became tearful.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have read the article that was published this morning," she went on, more calmly. "I heard some people at the hotel speak of it while we were waiting to go out into the dining-room. They thought I couldn't hear them, but I did hear—every word. They laughed, and they said there was a good deal more behind it than the paper said. I knew what that meant. When they went out I looked at the paper on a file. And

yet you can ask me to go back to Washington after that?" she said, with reproach and shame in her voice.

Briggs grew pale. "I hoped you might not hear of it," he said. "I'm sorry, Helen."

She hesitated, but she resolutely kept her face turned from him. Then she gathered her wraps again and left.

For a few moments after she disappeared Douglas Briggs stood where she had left him. Then he sank into the seat beside the desk. Until now he had believed that a reconciliation with his wife was sure to come in time. Now the situation seemed hopeless. He had lost her forever. This last humiliation made it impossible for her to ever respect him again. In spite of his resolutions of the past few months, he felt that he deserved his punishment. He had not only spoiled his own happiness—he had ruined hers. That was the cruelest pain of all. Now he felt, with a bitterness greater than he had ever known, that without her love, without her sympathy and companionship, life had nothing that could give him a moment's satisfaction. Why should he go on striving? Why not give up his ambitions and his aspirations? They had only brought him disappointment and suffering.

XXII

"Just as I was leaving I met a messenger-boy with these returns. I opened the envelope."

Douglas Briggs started. Farley's cheerful and business-like voice had given him a sensation of terror.

"Oh, is that you, Farley?" he said. "All right," he went on, vaguely. Then he glanced at the yellow paper in Farley's hand. "What does it say?"

"The returns that we received over the wire from the Ninth District were wrong. They got mixed down at the *Gazette* office."

"How was that?" Briggs's voice showed that he was still bewildered.

"The majority of 235 was not for you."

The full significance of the remark slowly made its way into Briggs's mind. "Ah!" He shrugged his shoulders. "That's a bad sign, isn't it?"

"Very bad. I knew they'd been spending money up there."

Briggs sat back in his chair. He had recovered himself now. "Well, they would have spent more than we could; so, perhaps, it's just as well that we didn't spend any."

Farley looked thoughtful. "I think I'll let those fellows rip," he said, slowly. "I'll stay here and watch out for developments."

"Don't do it, Farley," said Briggs, wearily. "It isn't worth while."

Farley looked astonished. "Not worth while?" he repeated.

"No. I don't care whether I'm licked or not. In fact, I think I'd rather be licked."

Farley looked sharply at Briggs. "You're tired out, I guess," he said.

"Yes, I'm mentally, physically, morally exhausted," Briggs replied, passing his hand across his eyes. "Nothing seems worth while to me—not even success. Strange, isn't it? I've staked everything on this election to-night, and if I'm beaten my political career is done for. And yet I don't care."

"But you won't be beaten," Farley insisted, with a laugh.

Briggs made a gesture of impatience. "Don't be too sure of that. To tell the truth, Farley, I've felt all along as if the fight were hopeless. But I've tried to keep a stiff upper lip. I didn't want you fellows to know how discouraged I was. Look here, Farley, I'm sick of this. If I'm snowed under, I'll only get what I deserve."

"You're pretty tired, Congressman." Farley's face showed anxiety. He had seen men break down before under the strain of a political campaign.

"When a man has to go through life without any self-respect he's apt to get pretty tired of himself. And when he has a wife who knows him!" Briggs threw back his head and

laughed. "God! I suppose there are thousands of men right here in New York who are like that. Their wives know they're blackguards, and they know they know it!"

They sat in silence. The look of worry was deepening in Farley's face.

"Farley," Briggs suddenly asked, "how old are you?"

"Thirty-five."

"How does it happen that you aren't married?"

Farley smiled and flushed. "Oh, I've had other things than marriage to think of," he said, evasively.

Douglas Briggs looked at him for a moment. "Do you mean that you've never been in love?" he asked.

"No, I didn't mean that," Farley replied, walking to the desk and looking down at some papers, with both hands resting on the edge.

"Then you have been?"

Farley did not stir. "Yes," he replied.

"Seriously?"

Farley nodded.

"What was the matter?"

Farley flushed again. "I couldn't get her!"

"Someone else?"

"Yes."

Douglas Briggs looked at Farley with pity in his eyes. "And she knows about it?" he asked, gently.

"I think so. I don't know," said Farley, turning away and leaning against the desk with his back toward Briggs.

For several moments neither spoke. They heard the clock tick.

"I suppose there is some sort of justice in this world," Briggs remarked, with a sigh, "but it's pretty hard to see it sometimes."

"I've thought of that myself," Farley replied, drily.

"But I'm beginning to find out one thing, Farley. The Almighty often likes to give us what we deserve by letting us have the things we want."

"Sometimes He gives us more than we deserve," said Farley, in a low tone.

"Well, if a man gets a hard blow

it's something to be able to stand up against it. And no matter how much you've had to take, Farley, you can have the satisfaction of knowing what you are."

"That's a pretty poor satisfaction," Farley replied, with a laugh.

"Perhaps you'll care more about it when I tell you what it has done for me. There are two people who have completely changed my views of life lately. One is my wife. You are the other."

Farley looked up for the first time during the talk. "I?" he said, in surprise.

Briggs nodded. "Yes. Till I began to know you, I didn't believe that there were men in the world like you. I had always acted from selfish motives, and I supposed that everyone did."

"Oh, no," Farley protested.

Briggs lifted his hand. "Oh, don't contradict me. I know what I'm talking about. You think all those reform measures I worked so hard for last year—you think they were unselfish. Well, so they were, in one respect—I didn't get any money out of them. But they were really selfish. I backed them—well, I suppose because I wanted to live up to the good opinion my wife had of me, and I wanted to justify myself for other things I had done." Briggs rose from the chair and met Farley's startled gaze. "Would you like to know why I say these things to you? It's simply because I can't stand playing the part any longer. I'm a blackguard, Farley. I'm as vile as any of those fellows in Washington you've been fighting against for years. All that woman said in her article is practically true."

"What?" Farley exclaimed, incredulously.

"I was hand in glove with that fellow West till I discovered that he had been making love to Mrs. Briggs. If I hadn't found him out, I shouldn't have had the moral courage to throw him over. Go and tell that, if you like, to your friends at the Citizens' Club."

"Oh, this is impossible!" said Farley, with distress in his eyes.

"I don't wonder you think so," Briggs replied, with a sickly smile. For several moments they stood without speaking. Farley showed in his face that he was running rapidly over everything in the past. The puzzled expression gave place to a look of disappointment and pain.

"Does Mrs. Briggs know of this?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And she—?" He stopped.

"I don't wonder that you can't say it, Farley. No, she hasn't forgiven me. She never will. Now what do you propose to do about it?"

Farley did not stir. His face grew pale. "Nothing," he said at last.

"Of course, I can't expect to have your confidence again," Briggs went on, in a low voice.

"Why not? It seems to me you have a greater claim on it now than ever."

"Do you mean to say that you can have any respect for me after what I've told you?" Briggs asked.

"I know enough about public life, Briggs, to see what the temptation must have been. And then, I can't see what you've gained by it."

Douglas Briggs lowered his head. "Thank you, Farley." After a moment, he asked: "And are you doing all this for my sake or for—"

Farley turned away with a smile. "Well, partly for your sake," he replied.

At that moment Fanny darted into the room, followed by Guy. "It's all ready, Uncle Doug!"

"What is?"

"Why, the supper. I got it all up myself—the loveliest scrambled eggs, with tomatoes and some chicken salad and coffee and—well, you'll see. Now please go down."

"All right; you are a good girl, Fanny. But I must have told you that before."

Farley left the room with Briggs. "I'll take a cab down to the club."

"And tell them just as much as you like," Briggs remarked.

"Trust me for that," said Farley.

XXIII

FANNY looked after the disappearing figures. "They seem kind of worried, don't they?" she said to Guy.

"Oh, you're always imagining things," Guy replied, with masculine impatience.

"You say that just because I'm so much cleverer than you are. At school the girls used to call me the barometer. I could always tell just how they felt."

"Well, if you only knew how I felt at this moment!" Guy exclaimed, ruefully.

Fanny seized him by both hands. "Are your hands feverish and clammy? And do you feel cold chills running down your back? That's the way they feel in novels." She began to jump up and down, as she always did in moments of excitement. "Now, what are you going to say? Tell me, quick. He'll be here in two minutes. He said he was coming right down. 'Sh! Here he comes now.'"

"This is a most infernal town," cried Jonathan Wallace, pulling down his cuffs. "If I lived here I'd go crazy from insomnia." He looked down at Fanny with the resentful look that even the best of fathers sometimes like to assume with their children. "Didn't you say someone wanted to see me?"

"Yes," Fanny replied, with a nervous laugh. Then she added, satirically, patting Guy on the back: "This gentleman. I think I'll get away. Bye-bye, little one." She danced out of the room, waving her hand to the young fellow, who stood awkward and flushed, as if trying to think of something to say.

"Well, sir?" Jonathan Wallace walked toward Guy with his right hand thrust into his coat front. At that moment he appeared especially formidable. Guy noticed that his red face, with its large, hooked nose, made him look curiously like a parrot.

"Well—er—you—that is—" Guy

began. Then he lapsed into silence. "I wanted to ask you something," he blurted out.

Wallace cleared his throat; a faint twinkle appeared in his left eye. "Well, what is it?"

"The fact is, sir, I want to ask—well, to ask a favor of you." Perspiration stood on Guy's forehead.

The elder man's mouth tightened. "Young man, I hope you haven't got into any money difficulties? Well, I shouldn't be surprised if you had. In this political business of yours, you people seem to do nothing but spend money. By Jove! I sometimes think it would pay the country to rent out the Government to a firm of contractors. Well, what is it? Don't be afraid of me; I ain't half so bad as I sound. If you've gone beyond your depth, perhaps I can help you out."

"Thank you, sir, you're very kind," Guy replied. "I appreciate it. But it isn't that."

"Oh, isn't it?" Wallace said, in a tone of relief. "Well, that's all right, then." He acted as if the interview were ended. He had the air of thinking Guy no longer remained in the room.

Guy laughed awkwardly, as if to emphasize his presence. "It's something a good deal more serious."

"Oho!" Wallace looked interested.

"It isn't your money I'm after; it's Fanny."

"Fanny! My little Fanny?" asked Wallace, in a tone of amusement and surprise.

"Yes, sir, your little Fanny," Guy replied, boldly. "I'm in love with her."

"Well, that ain't anything remarkable, after all," said Wallace. "I believe most of the boys down home are. She always was a great hand for the boys. They like her easy way with them, I suppose. Well, I'm very glad you like Fanny. I'm sure it's a compliment to the whole family. You must see a lot of pretty girls during the Winter."

"But I want to marry her," Guy insisted. He did not at all like the

old gentleman's manner, and yet, oddly enough, it reminded him of Fanny's.

"Oh, you do, do you?" Wallace held his right hand over his lips. "Well, that's a pretty serious matter, isn't it? I thought perhaps you were just feeling your way round. Lots of boys down home like to talk to me about Fanny. They're just trying to get the lay of the land, I suppose. But I generally laugh at 'em, an' tell 'em she's hardly out of her pinafores yet. You see, by the time she gets through college——"

"Through college?" Guy gasped.

Wallace gave him a severe look. "Yes. Why not? Don't you believe in college education for women? Well, I declare, you college fellows are pretty selfish! You get plenty of education yourselves, but you——"

"Oh, I don't care anything about that," Guy interrupted. "Let them have all the education they want. But Fanny doesn't want to go to college. She only wants——"

"Eh? What did you say she wanted?" Wallace asked, shrewdly.

"She wants me," said Guy, as modestly as he could.

"Oh, she does, does she? How do you know that?"

Guy was very modest now. "Because she told me so."

"M'm!" said Wallace. The old gentleman's mouth grew tight again. Then he said, with a sly glance at Guy: "How much money have you got?"

"What?" Guy cried, helplessly, his face turning scarlet.

"What's your income? Are you prepared to support a wife?"

"I—I expect to be—in time."

Wallace smiled, and smoothed his thick, white hair. "Well, Fanny was never much of a hand to wait for anything; I can tell you that. How much money do you make?"

Guy shifted his position. "Well, not much at present. In fact, it is hardly worth speaking of."

"Any prospects?" Wallace persisted, mercilessly.

"I don't exactly know," Guy re-

plied, feeling that things were going very badly.

"You don't know whether you have any prospects or not?" cried Wallace.

"The fact is——"

"Eh?"

"My affairs are rather mixed up just now."

Wallace looked indignant. "And yet you want to marry my daughter! Well, I like your nerve, young man!"

Fanny suddenly stood between them. She had evidently been listening at the door. "That's just what I like, too, dad. But it doesn't seem to be cutting any ice now." Then she turned to Guy. "I'm ashamed of you! After all your practicing, too! Now look here, dad," she went on, putting her hand on her father's shoulder. "I can't live without Guy. See how much better I do it," she whispered to the young fellow. "In fact," she went on, in a loud voice and with a languishing glance, "I should die without him."

Wallace pulled down his waistcoat. "Well, go ahead and die!" he said, doggedly. "It would be money saved for me."

Fanny's face assumed a look of reproach. "Isn't it awful to hear a father talk like that? Now, dad, you've always blamed me for not being a boy, though everybody knows boys are the most expensive things. Think of the money they spend in college, and all it costs to get 'em out of scrapes! Now, here's a son for you all ready-made, with his wild oats sown and ready to buckle down to hard work."

"Look here," cried Wallace. "What does all this mean, anyway?"

"It means," said Fanny, imitating her father's tone, "it means that you've got to give him a job."

"What?"

"You've got to give him a job!" Fanny repeated, loudly.

"A job?" Wallace echoed, still mystified.

Fanny nodded vigorously. "M'm—h'm!"

"Where?" Wallace asked, glancing vaguely round the room, as if searching for a spot where Guy might be safely employed.

"In the factory," said Fanny, decisively.

Wallace pointed toward Guy, who stood looking helpless and foolish. He felt as children do when their mothers discuss in their presence their appearance and their infantile diseases. "What? Him?" Wallace asked.

"Yes, *him*," Fanny declared, resentfully. "Now don't you go and make fun of your future son-in-law, dad."

Wallace was still struggling with astonishment, either real or assumed.

"In the factory?"

"Yes," said Fanny, lifting her eyebrows.

Wallace faced Guy. "You're willing to soil those white hands of yours, sir?"

Guy laughed and blushed, instinctively putting his hands behind him. "Oh, yes," he replied. "Glad of the chance."

Wallace was incredulous. "And take ten dollars a week for the first year?"

Fanny dashed toward Guy and threw her arm protectingly across his shoulders. "What?" she exclaimed, incredulously. "My precious! Ten dollars a week!"

"I'll take anything you think I'm worth, sir," said Guy, over her head.

"With his intellect, and all he learned at Harvard!" Fanny protested. "Never, dad! You just give him twenty-five, or I'll cast you off!"

"If you show that there's any good stuff in you, I may give you fifteen after three months," said Wallace.

"Thank you, sir."

Fanny dropped her arm, clasped her hands and, with lowered head, walked toward her father. "Will you give us your blessing, sir?" she asked.

"I'll send you to bed if you don't behave yourself," Wallace replied. Then he went on, with a warning gesture: "And let me tell you one thing. There's to be no engagement between

you two young people for a year. Do you understand that?"

Fanny looked crestfallen. But in a moment she brightened. Guy bowed respectfully. He seemed glad to accept any terms that would secure Fanny for him. He hadn't expected any such luck as this.

"Perhaps it's just as well," Fanny philosophically said, as her father started to leave the room. "He couldn't afford to buy a ring, anyway."

XXIV

As soon as Wallace had closed the door, Fanny leaped into Guy's arms.

"Oh, you were perfect!" she cried. "I'm glad you didn't do as we practiced, after all."

Guy kissed her rapturously. "Oh, Fan, I hope you won't get sick of me!" he said.

The telephone rang, and Fanny had to postpone her reply. "There, go and attend to business," she said, giving Guy a push. She watched him as he held the receiver to his ear.

"Hello! Yes. Oh, Farley. What? Mr. Briggs is still down stairs. 500? Well, that looks bad, doesn't it? Do you mean to say they think he's—? Oh, impossible!"

"What's impossible?" Fanny cried.

Guy listened intently, ignoring her. "No. I think you'd better come here. He'll want you. I'll tell him."

"Tell him what?" said Fanny.

"Good-bye." Guy rang off.

"Why don't you answer me? Tell him what?" She heard footsteps in the hall.

"Well, my dear," said Douglas Briggs, opening the door, "I feel a good deal better."

Fanny held her finger to her lips. "Sh! Guy has something to tell."

Briggs observed that Guy was waiting for a chance to speak. "News?" he asked, nervously.

Guy nodded. "They say down at the Citizens' Club that things are looking rather bad."

Briggs looked steadily at the boy. "Who told you?"

"Farley," Guy replied.

"Ah!" Briggs sank into a chair. "If Farley is losing courage—! Well, never mind."

"But you aren't beaten yet, Uncle Doug," Fanny exclaimed, resolutely.

"What difference does it make—now or two years from now? It's only a question of time."

Michael tapped on the door and entered with the soft step of one bearing important news. "A boy just come in with this telegram, sir."

"Open it, Guy," said Briggs.

Guy tore the envelope. "These are the figures Farley gave me," he said. He passed the telegram to Briggs.

"It's all up with me!" said Briggs, just as Helen appeared.

"But they haven't heard yet from the Nineteenth District," Guy interposed. "We can count on a two hundred majority there."

"No; West has spent more money there than anywhere else. I shall be surprised if—" He stopped at the sound of the telephone bell. Guy darted for the receiver.

"Oh, hello, hello! Is that you, Farley? What? Oh, Bradley. This isn't the Citizens' Club, then? Oh, the *Gazette*! No, Farley isn't here, but he'll be here in a minute. He's tearing over from the club in a cab. What district? The Nineteenth? We've been waiting for that. How many?" Guy listened; they all listened. "Well, good-bye. Thank you. Good-bye. I'll tell him." Guy turned from the telephone and faced the others.

"For goodness' sake, speak!" cried Fanny.

Guy's mouth twitched. "It looks like it's all over, Mr. Briggs."

"How much majority in the Nineteenth?" Briggs asked.

"Over three hundred against us."

Briggs drew a long breath. "I'm snowed under, buried! This is the last of me! Oh, well!"

Fanny burst out crying. "I think it's a shame; and the awful things you see in Washington who go to Congress year after year, till

they're ready to drop!" She started to leave the room and was followed by Guy. At the door she met Farley, entering.

"Hello, what's the matter, Miss Fanny?" he asked.

"Oh, go and find out!" cried Fanny, dashing into the hall and up the stairs.

"Come in, Farley," said Briggs.

"You've heard the news, then?" Farley asked.

"Yes."

"They told me just as I was getting into the cab." Farley smiled at Helen. "Well, we made a good fight, Mrs. Briggs. Too bad all our work was thrown away!"

"It wasn't, Farley. That is, yours wasn't," said Briggs. "And before you and my wife, I can say what I shouldn't dare to say to anyone else. I'm glad I've been defeated. I'm glad to be out of it. Of course, I am out of it now for good. After such a crushing defeat and with my record, I can never get back." He saw that Farley was about to protest. "Oh, don't, Farley! Even if I could I don't want to. I feel as if all my energy and ambition were gone."

"They'll come back after you've got rested," Farley remarked. "You're only tired out. You've been working your nerves for weeks. Now I'm going to say good-night." He offered his hand to Helen. "Good-night, Mrs. Briggs."

"Good-night," said Helen.

Farley stepped back to let Michael speak to Briggs. "There's a gentleman in the reception room, sir, that wants to see you. He says he comes from the *Chronicle*."

Douglas Briggs looked at the card. His lip curled. "From the *Chronicle*?" he said, contemptuously. "Well, we mustn't refuse the *Chronicle*. I suppose he's come to see how I've taken my defeat." He rose, adjusted his frock coat and threw back his shoulders. "You stay here, Farley, till I come back," he said.

"All right." Michael followed Briggs from the room, leaving Farley and Helen together.

"Mr. Briggs will be all right after he's had a rest from the strain," said Farley.

"I hope so," Helen sighed. "It's a relief that it's over—such a relief."

"And of course," Farley went on, "Mr. Briggs will change his mind about going out of politics."

"Do you think so?" Helen betrayed surprise in her tone.

"We need men like him in Washington." Helen did not speak. She held her head down. "Mrs. Briggs!" Helen kept her face hidden. "I hope you'll pardon me if I speak of something—something that is—well, that concerns you very closely. I do it only because I believe in Mr. Briggs, and because I care for his future and for his happiness, and for yours, if you'll let me say so."

"Thank you, Mr. Farley," said Helen, softly. "You've been very good to Douglas. He has often spoken of all you've done."

"Oh, that's nothing. But—he has told me all about that man West." Helen looked up, startled. "He hasn't spared himself. He has even made the case out worse than it is."

"He has told you?" said Helen.

"Yes."

"Of his own accord?"

"Yes."

"And you still—? You—?"

"Yes, I believe in him. I believe he has been punished for whatever wrong he has done. And I can't see why a man's whole future should be spoiled because he has made a mistake at the start. There are plenty of men in public life who have made mistakes like his—men who were young and inexperienced. Some of them have since done fine work."

"Why have you spoken to me about this, Mr. Farley?"

"Because—well, because I know—that is, I suspect, from what Mr. Briggs has told me, that you're not in sympathy with his public life."

"That is true. I haven't been, lately."

"And I thought perhaps if you looked at things a little differently—"

"I shouldn't be so harsh?" Helen interrupted, her face flushing. "That is what you mean, Mr. Farley, isn't it?"

"No, not that," Farley replied, growing more embarrassed. "I thought perhaps you'd help him to get back where he belongs, that's all. It's going to be a hard fight. Most men wouldn't have the nerve to make it. But he has, if you'll help him."

Helen's eyes filled with tears. "You make me ashamed, Mr. Farley. If you can forgive him, after all you've done for him—"

Farley laughed. "Oh, I haven't done half so much as you think, Mrs. Briggs. I'll feel repaid if you'll only make him see that he ought to stay in the fight. Here he comes now."

Douglas Briggs looked more cheerful. "Well, it wasn't half so bad as I thought," he said. "Nice fellow. One of those young college men. He was so ashamed of his assignment I had hard work to put him at his ease."

Farley offered his hand.

"Now I must be off, Mrs. Briggs."

"Come in to-morrow, Farley," said Briggs. "I want to have a talk with you."

When Farley had left the room Briggs sank on the couch. Now that he was alone with Helen, all his buoyancy disappeared. His face looked haggard; the hard lines around his mouth deepened.

Helen rose and sat beside him. "Douglas," she said. He did not reply. "I couldn't say anything while they were here," she went on, "but I'm sorry. Perhaps it's all for the best."

He drew away from her. "All for the best!" he repeated, hopelessly. "That's a poor consolation. Do you know what it means to me? It means that I've lost my chance of redeeming myself. That's the only reason why I wanted to be elected. I was sincere when I said I was sick of the life. But I thought if I could only go back there as an honest man and keep straight, then I could come

to you and tell you I'd tried to make up for what I had done."

"I understand that, Douglas," Helen replied. "But it is all right now."

"How is it all right?"

"With me, I mean. I love you all the more because you've failed."

He leaned forward, with his hands between his knees. "When I have nothing to offer you, Helen," he said, "not even a clean reputation?—when I'm ruined and disgraced, with hardly a dollar in the world?"

"You aren't ruined and disgraced. It's foolish to speak so. You're only forty-two. Why, you're just beginning, Douglas! And there's my property, Douglas, my two thousand a year; that will be something to start on. And you have your practice."

"We'll have to give up this house," he said, almost in a whisper.

Helen lifted her head. Her eyes flashed. "Never! We'll live as we've been living. I won't allow them to humiliate you."

For a moment he sat without moving. Then he let his hand rest on hers. Suddenly he lifted her hand and held it to his lips. He rose quickly and walked to the back of the room, where he stood trying to control himself. At last he said:

"I don't deserve to have you, Helen."

"And there's Mr. Burrell, Douglas. There's his law case."

"True. I had forgotten about that. Oh, maybe I've some fight left in me, dear." He walked back and sat beside her. "Only—I need you now more than ever."

"And I'm going to be more to you, Douglas. I've just been talking with Mr. Farley. He has made me see things so differently! I've been selfish, Douglas, and—and harsh with you. I've never taken enough interest in your work. I've allowed you to bear all the burdens. That's why I lost your confidence. But in future we're going to share everything, aren't we? And one thing, dear, you aren't going to give up ever: you'll

stay in politics, and we'll go back to Washington some day."

Briggs looked away and smiled.

"Ah, I know when I've had enough," he replied, shaking his head.

"No. You haven't had enough. You'll have to go back, to please me."

He turned to her again and looked into her face. Then he took her in his arms and pressed his lips against her cheek.



THE COMING-OUT PARTY

SOCIETY is all astir, and rightly so, no doubt, Since two sweet buds of womanhood next week are "coming out." The Misses Schuyler and Van Brunt make their début at Brown's, With timid, fluttering hearts, no doubt, and lovely Paris gowns. The invitations have been mailed—one found its way to me—"To be presented . . ." Well, by Jove! how very strange 'twill be! My tongue will frame the names they knew in girlhood's sweet estate, For Margaret was Maggie then and Katherine was Kate!

No doubt Miss Katherine Van Brunt possesses beauty rare;
The social set will praise her gown—I'll only see her hair.
And Margaret Schuyler will, I hear, society surprise
With wealth of gems magnificent—I'll only see her eyes.
My playmates both in years ago, to Maggie's eyes I'd look
For schoolgirl sympathy; Kate's curls, as black as any rook,
I used to star with daisies in the long ago. Ah, Fate!
But Margaret was Maggie then and Katherine was Kate.

Their gowns will be, I'm sure, the kind society adores—
To me there'll come the memory of gingham pinafores!
And when the social set shall rave o'er coiffures, waves and curls,
I'll think of hair in long-hung braids they used to wear as girls.
Sweet débutantes, they'll fill your ears with flattery, I know,
And you'll grow changed, as have your names since that sweet long ago
I've cloistered in my memory and told its beads to Fate,
For Margaret was Maggie then and Katherine was Kate.

ROY FARRELL GREENE.



NOT INCLINED TO WAIT

"AND you want to take my only child from me in my old age?" said the old man, tearfully.

"Well," replied the young man, slowly, "I don't think I'd want to take her in her old age."

THE POET AND HIS SONGS

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

*UNTO the source of song, that unseen place,
The poet turned his face,
And said, "I listen; let the Voices bring
New songs for me to sing,
New truths for me to utter unto men.
I would not sing the same old songs again."
The Voices answered, "Nay, all songs are old,
But new hearts wait to hear old truths retold.
A sparkling spring, in ages gone, sprang up
From mother earth. To-day you fill your cup,
And offer it to some parched, thirsting lip.
The source from which you dip,
Oh, is it not as grateful and as cold
As if a thousand cups of curious mould
Had not been filled before from that same spring?
Sing, then, the old songs! Sing!"*

THE SONGS

I

The heart of a man is a universe,
With heaven in a blessing and hell in a curse.

In the thought of a man lies ever his fate;
There is life in loving and death in hate.

He will rise or fall, he will soar or sink,
Always and ever as he may think.

For the key to all mysteries here or above,
To birth, life, death, is in one word—love.

Ay, love is the secret of power and pelf,
And the key to the heart of the Maker Himself.

II

Sorrow touched Beauty's brow; it grew more fair,
As if a shining crown were resting there.

Then Worry's hand passed o'er that chiseled face,
And Beauty vanished, leaving not a trace.

Sorrow is noble, and of heavenly birth;
Worry is but a bastard of the earth.

III

Three gifts I would from thy great wealth beguile—
Thy smile.

And one I would not for a kingdom miss—
Thy kiss.

And one that would unending joy impart—
Thy heart.

IV

A rose hung on a maiden's breast,
A brown bee hovered near.
Then, grieving, fled. The lover said:
"So you, too, sigh and fear."

The maiden watched the wee, winged thing,
And smiled as it departed.
"Methinks," quoth she, "that little bee
Was foolishly faint-hearted."

Her mouth was like a crumpled rose,
As fragrant and as fair.
I have not heard what next occurred—
But would you take a dare?



ONE OF THE TWO

WIFE—Fred, don't you think we'd better get a cushion for our pew in church?

HUSBAND—Yes, or get a better preacher.



THE SWEET THINGS!

HE (*passionately*)—You are all the world to me!

SHE (*cooly*)—And all the world loves a lover.
They marry.



THE MÉSALLIANCE

HE—It was another case of December and May.
SHE—Was the groom old?

"No, quite young; but the bride was from Boston."

THE DICKENS CHRISTMAS

By Stephen Fiske

EVERYONE knows the components of the Dickens Christmas. There must be cold, frost and snow outside the house, and warmth, wassail and welcome within. The table must be heaped with good things to eat, and the poor relations must be helped most plentifully to the Christmas pudding. There must be songs and stories, and, as a touch of pathos to relieve the general jollity, the pinched faces of poverty-stricken listeners must be seen through the windows. Finally, a child (preferably a cripple) must give from his high-chair the Christmas toast, "God bless us every one!"

Where did Charles Dickens find the model for his Christmas, or when and how did he invent it?

According to the best critical estimate, Dickens could describe only what he had seen. In his long, midnight walks through the London streets and his wide travels through England, America, Italy, France and Switzerland he encountered many curious characters and strange scenes. These he could depict, alter, exaggerate, caricature or burlesque with natural but consummate art to suit the purposes of his stories. But without some such suggestion from his keen observation he could not originate personalities, places and incidents, as other novelists have done. From the beginning to the end of his brilliant career he was rather a reporter than a romancer.

Thus, Dickens's father is burlesqued as *Micawber*; his wife as *Mrs. Nickleby*; his dearest friends are comically portrayed—Leigh Hunt as *Skimpole*; John Forster as *Pickwick*; Walter Sav-

age Landor as *Boythorn*—and in all his forlorn children he draws upon his own experiences when he was a shabby, hungry, neglected, "thrown away" boy, working hard and eating out his heart in a blacking manufactory. He even uses for a revolting criminal the cherished but suggestive name of his chum, Fagin, who saved his life. But, because he had never been in society, his representations of aristocratic life are absurdly incorrect, and the names of his lords and ladies are badly devised. There are no quotations in his works, because he had read few books, and no accurate conception of any class or locality that he had not personally studied.

Since Dickens has given the English-speaking world Christmas as we now celebrate it, he must have seen or heard of it somewhere before he popularized it by his Christmas stories.

The first suggestion of the bountiful feast that is so prominent in the Dickens Christmas may have come from Yorkshire. The *menu* for a Yorkshire tea is: "Put everything eatable in the house on the table;" and the Yorkshire dinners are proportionately generous. From Yorkshire may have come, also, the hearty geniality of the Christmas festival. Dickens knew Yorkshire well; he had frequently enjoyed its bounteous hospitality, had caught the twang of its dialect, and could reproduce its keen but cordial atmosphere. But there was in Yorkshire no such Christmas-tide as Dickens describes, until long after he had become famous.

Most of the other shires of England were visited by Dickens while he was a reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*.

"There never was anybody else connected with newspapers," he says, "who in the same space of time had so much express and post-chaise experience as I. Returning home from exciting political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every known description of vehicle." But in all his journeyings through the English counties he never happened upon his Christmas.

Take Forster's minute and detailed "Life of Charles Dickens"—I do not ask you to read it—and a glance through the table of contents from 1812, when Dickens was born, to 1842, when he made his first visit to America, will show the surprising fact that Christmas is never mentioned. In the body of the book it is referred to once, but only casually: "Christmas interposed its delays, too, so that Twelfth Night had come and gone before *Little Nell* died." This was in 1840.

So far as can be gleaned from the fragments of autobiography sent by Dickens to Forster, there was no Christmas during the boyhood of Dickens; no Christmas in the Marshalsea prison, where he visited his bankrupt father; no Christmas at the Wellington House Academy, which he attended after he was reinstated in something like gentility; no Christmas for his own children. During the first thirty years of his life Christmas seems to have been to him no more significant than any other holiday. The only reference to it in his numerous letters is at the close of 1840, when he wrote: "I hope that we may enjoy together fifty more Christmases, at least, in this world, and eternal Summers in another."

In "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club," written in 1836-37, we recall a Christmas at the *Wardle* homestead, near Dingley Dell, and Dickens prefaces his account of the festivities with a few conventional paragraphs, in which Christmas and New Year memories are commingled with thought of the hearts that have

ceased to beat, hands that have grown cold, merry voices and smiling faces, and which conclude: "Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth, and transport the sailor and the traveler, thousands of miles away, back to his own fireside and his quiet home!"

"Pickwick" is full of the Christmas spirit, better expressed than in the platitudinous paragraphs from which I have quoted; but if you expect to find the Dickens Christmas at Dingley Dell you will be disappointed.

Christmas Eve, not Christmas Day, was celebrated at the *Wardle* "Manor Farm." On the day before Christmas, after the wedding of *Emma* and *Mr. Trundle*, they had the breakfast at which the poor relations drank themselves under the table; the dinner that was as hearty as the breakfast, but of which the poor relations were too seedy to partake; the dance; opened by *Mr. Pickwick* and *The Old Lady*, with *Mr. Winkle* and *Arabella Allen* kissing in the corner; the mistletoe, that hung in the kitchen, and beneath which everybody kissed; blind-man's-buff, snap-dragon, forfeits, songs and stories. But on Christmas itself nothing special occurred, except the arrival of *Mr. Bob Sawyer* and *Mr. Benjamin Allen*; attendance at morning service in the village church; a skating party, and the accident to *Mr. Pickwick* that necessitated his being put to bed. Of course, a bowl of punch was sent to *Mr. Pickwick's* room—afterward a second and a third bowl—and a carouse was held in honor of his escape from drowning in five feet of water; but nobody is recorded as having done anything in honor of Christmas.

All through the first volume of the Dickens biography what may be not unfairly termed the same slighting of Christmas is noticeable.

Dickens was constantly organizing social entertainments. As the roisterers in "The School for Scandal" sing:

Here's to the lass! Let the toast pass!
I warrant 'twill prove an excuse for the
glass—

so any excuse warranted him in summoning his friends to a dinner. His birthday; his children's birthdays; the birthday of Forster or some other member of the coterie; a very dull or stormy day; a very bright or Springlike day; a visit to Brighton or Broadstairs; the publication of the first number of a new story; the anniversary of the publication of an old story; the arrival or the departure of a distinguished guest; a change of publishers; a reading of the proof sheets; a decision about the pictures, and sometimes sheer animal spirits only, were sufficient to induce Dickens to send out hasty notes that clang like a dinner bell: "Come! I shall expect you! A red-hot chop for dinner and a glass of good wine! Come, come, come!" There were such invitations, more or less impromptu, for Twelfth Night and for New Year's, but none for Christmas.

In the Dickens coterie were Macready, Talfourd, Stanfield, D'Orsay, Quin, Wilkie, Landseer, Brougham, Sydney Smith and Lord Bulwer. With a variation of *Roderick Dhu*, one blast upon his dinner horn could summon all these men, with Tennent, Jeffreys, Procter, Harness and Forster for substitutes. These were names to conjure with, and there are records of convivialities like those of the Shakespearian and Jonsonian meetings of which Herrick sings:

Ah, Ben! Say how or when
Shall we, thy guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun,
Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild—not mad?
And yet each verse of thine
Outdid the meats, outdid the frolic wine!

But Dickens never summoned these men of varied genius and geniality to a Christmas dinner.

From 1835 to 1842 there were din-

ners at Jack Straw's Castle; at Eel Pie House, Twickenham; at the Shakespeare Hotel, Richmond; at Doughty Street; at Devonshire Terrace; at the Petersham Cottage; at the Maypole Inn, Chigwell. And Forster, with the minutiae of a Boswell, notes them all, from "a birthday dinner in the study" to a formal banquet "on the anniversary of 'Peck-sniff!'" Had Dickens introduced the Christmas ceremonials during this period the fact could hardly have escaped Forster's faithful cognizance.

Even when Dickens first departed for America, with "all sorts of cordialities, anticipations and stretching forth of palms," it was the New Year, not the Christmas, that was solemnly observed. "On New Year's Eve they dined with me," says Forster, "and I with them on New Year's Day, when (the Dickens house having been taken for the period of his absence by General Sir John Wilson) we sealed up the wine cellar, after opening therein some sparkling Moselle in honor of the ceremony, and drinking it to his happy return."

Dickens sailed for America on the 4th of January, 1842, and returned in the Summer of the same year. He had seen no Christmas in the United States or in Canada, where he played in private theatricals with the officers of the Coldstream Guards. But he must have heard of the annual holiday that we inherited from our Dutch ancestors and developed and improved into the greatest of family festivals; for after his visit to this continent Dickens was, in regard to Christmas, a changed and altogether different man.

When he had settled down in London and begun to publish "Martin Chuzzlewit" he was startled to learn that the sales had fallen off terribly. Instead of the 40,000 to 50,000 sale of the first numbers of "The Pickwick Papers" and "Nicholas Nickleby," and the 60,000 to 70,000 of "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Barnaby Rudge," the demand for "Martin Chuzzlewit" could not be forced beyond 20,000. Had the British public

forgotten him during his few months of absence? Had his former readers lost their taste for his peculiar style of literature? Did the English resent as bitterly as the Americans the blunders and excesses of his "American Notes?" Whatever the reason, the significant fact that his fifth story was not as immediately successful as his first boyish book astonished and frightened him. Something must be done to win back his public, and in this serious emergency he disregarded all the precedents of his career and turned for help and comfort to Christmas.

Why should his mind have taken this extraordinary bent, of which there was no former indication?

In the intervals of "Martin Chuzzlewit" he wrote "A Christmas Carol." The opening sale was only 8,000; but it was 8,000 in addition to the "Chuzzlewit" circulation. His profits on the "Carol" were only \$3,750; he had hoped for \$5,000. But Christmas had saved him. In his extremity he had been guided by American ideas to a literary gold mine, which he worked so profitably for many years that the first edition of "Dr. Mari-gold's Prescription," his Christmas story for 1865, numbered 255,000 copies.

Christmas ideas led Dickens to the establishment of a weekly story paper that brought him an ample income for the rest of his life. In 1845 his receipts from "The Cricket on the Hearth" were double those from "A Christmas Carol," and he promptly planned a periodical to be called the

Cricket. In 1846 he modified his plan to "something like the *Spectator*," and proposed to call it the *Shadow*. This idea subsequently took practical form in *Household Words*, which was transformed into *All the Year Round* when he separated from his wife, and it was left in a codicil to his eldest son, as a most valuable property.

After the return of Dickens from America he was as enthusiastic about Christmas as he had been indifferent before. "I am full of Christmas plans for Rockingham," he writes. In a Christmas story he tells how, as a boy, he had longed to purchase his estate at Gadshill—though as a boy he was never known to mention Gadshill. There were Christmas theatricals at Tavistock House. Every year of his residence at Gadshill Dickens gave large Christmas parties there.

In Cleveland's sonorous words, "A condition, not a theory, confronts us." The Dickens Christmas, as we know and observe it, was not discovered or invented until he had visited America, and in this and other respects he returned from the United States noticeably and permanently altered from his former self. If there are no means to indubitably demonstrate the fact, it is at least a delightful probability that the modern Christmas, to which Dickens owed so much, and for which we owe him so much, originated from information acquired during his sojourn in this country, and that the spirit and customs of the day were impressed upon him by Longfellow, who was his guest in London for some weeks after his visit here.



A WOMAN'S REASON

I LOVE you—and you ask me why!
 Why, just because you're *you*!
 And if that isn't clear enough,
 Why, just because I do!

ELIZABETH HARMAN.

THE VOICE OF THE ROOM

By Theodosia Garrison

YEA, it is well to be a room—
Four walls, a ceiling and a floor,
A row of windows and a door
To let in day and shut out gloom.
What man shall say how much befalls
Within four walls?

I am so old that I forget
How many gliding years ago
I knew the step of Washington
And heard the voice of Lafayette,
And marked them dance with many score
Upon my floor.

And others followed after these
I have surrounded death and birth,
Have heard my rafters ring with mirth,
And shut in many tragedies;
I have heard words that only Love
Keeps reckoning of.

But comes a memory stronger yet
Of one who sat in flowered dress
And played soft songs of gentleness,
At twilight, on an old spinet;
And one who bent and called her fair
And kissed her there!

Beneath my roof they made Love's house;
Without, the chorusing of birds
Stilled at the sweetness of their words;
My walls recorded many vows
Of fealty and truth, no less
Than tenderness.

One night rang voices at the door—
A clash of swords and oaths—and one
Wild woman shriek that broke ere done.
There is a red stain on my floor
That, wash and paint it as ye will,
Remains there still.

THE SMART SET

And five-score years have dawned and set,
 And I remember, for at night
 A sweet-eyed ghost sits still and white
 There by the ghost of a spinet;
 And someone stands beside her and
 Kisses her hand.

In the pale glimpses of the moon
 They live the love they knew before.
 He wooes her as he did of yore;
 She sits and plays a noiseless tune
 For this one dead man's mute delight,
 Night after night.

I have grown old, but this is well,
 To hold a love that shall not die.
 The hate and bitterness pass by,
 But in my hold this love shall dwell
 Until my rafters and my hearth
 Sink down to earth.

Yea, it is well to be a room—
 To watch the generations pass,
 As one who sees within a glass
 Forms that advance and fade to gloom.
 What man shall say how much befalls
 Within four walls?



MORE THAN READY

“NOW,” said Mrs. Bridely, “just as soon as we get a good cook, dear, I am going to give a dinner.”

“All right,” replied her husband, quickly. “I’ll come.”



EXPERIENTIA DOCET

H E’S not the artist for success,
 Nor gains in the transaction,
 Who strives to give good likenesses
 Instead of satisfaction.

GEORGE BIRDSEYE.

THE ABERRATION OF MRS. CLIFTON

By John Barker

HENRY AND LOUELLA CLIFTON sat opposite each other at the breakfast table, as they had sat almost every morning for ten years.

The broker, a big, blond, handsome fellow of thirty-five, was half-hidden behind the morning paper. Save a listless "Good-morning, Louella," he had not said a word since coming down stairs fifteen minutes before. He had a drawn and anxious look about the eyes, and the hands that held the paper were unsteady.

His wife toyed with her breakfast, while her eyes roamed aimlessly about the beautiful room, resting now on a piece of priceless old tapestry, now on a bronze Bacchus in the corner. She leaned one elbow on the table and buried her fingers in the dark waves of her hair. Leaning forward so, her face was reflected in an old Venetian mirror on the wall. The mirror seemed to say, "You are very fair, Louella." The man opposite said nothing.

"Henry, I have asked Emil Homan to take me to hear 'Tannhäuser' this afternoon."

"Is that so?"

"You know I have a box for the whole course of matinées."

"I vaguely remember paying for it."

"You have no objection to my asking Homan?"

"Why, no; of course not. He seems the most manly of all the animals in your literary menagerie."

"I rather thought you liked him."

"Oh, yes; well enough. But I don't go in for poets, as you do."

"What do you fancy he told me yesterday?"

"Well, I am not much given to fancy. I shouldn't be able to keep up this house if I were."

"He said that my eyes were like those of his little sister down in Georgia—Marion, I think he called her."

Henry Clifton folded his paper and rose from the table.

"If that is the gawky youngster I saw walking with him on Broadway at the Christmas holidays I shouldn't feel flattered, if I were you. She had red hair and freckles."

"You can be very horrid sometimes, Henry."

"That is because I have no poetry in my soul. But I must be off. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Henry."

She heard him putting on his coat in the hall. After a moment he called back:

"I may not be home to dinner to-night."

"Very well."

He stood a moment, as if hesitating, took a step or two in the direction of the dining-room, then, shutting his lips very tight together, turned and left the house.

As the street door banged Mrs. Clifton leaned back in her chair and drew a long breath. It was the tenth anniversary of her wedding-day, and she knew that her husband had forgotten it. The memory of that day ten years ago and of the blissful weeks that followed brought the tears to her eyes. The husband had then been the lover, the devoted slave, the suppliant; to-day he was the broker

and man of business. He was fond of her, in a way, of course, she thought; but so he was fond of his mother and sisters and all the other members of his family. She wondered if a few years of marriage always rob a woman of her husband's love. Her heart was hungry for tenderness that morning; she wanted to be loved, desired and cherished, as she had been ten years before. If she had not been too proud she would have followed her husband into the hall, thrown her arms around him, and crushed out on his lips the love that was surging behind her own. But being a woman, she did nothing of the sort; and the force dammed up within her seethed into a dull resentment against the man whose seeming indifference stung and humiliated her.

Then she fell to thinking about Emil Homan. Her mind had reverted to him with disturbing persistency of late. His thin, dark, nervous face had a way of rising before her eyes in the darkness, and when she awoke in the morning it was of him she thought first. Yet there had never been a shadow of sentimentality between them; they were friends and comrades—nothing more.

She had an early lunch, dressed with unusual care, seated herself in a little rocker and read Balzac. The particular story of the great French master which she happened to be reading that afternoon was possibly not the best preparation—in her present mood—for a prolonged tête-à-tête with a man who had vaguely troubled her imagination for some time. She looked at the clock every few minutes. The time seemed long, and when the bell rang her heart began to beat much faster than usual.

"What a fool you are to-day!" she murmured to herself, rising and taking up the little French hat that lay on the dressing table.

Emil Homan came forward when she entered the drawing-room and took both her hands in his firm, warm clasp. He had been walking rapidly, there was a peculiar look in his eyes

that she did not remember having seen there before, and the very air seemed to vibrate around him.

"I hope I am not late," he said.

"No; are you?"

"A little. I was detained. Shall we go?"

They went out into the splendid sunshine. As the Clifton residence was only a few blocks from the Opera House they chose to walk.

"You are looking very beautiful to-day," he said. "What have you been doing?"

"Reading Balzac. And you?"

"Oh, several things. I wrote a poem, and—and made a fool of myself." He laughed a trifle recklessly, and she turned to look at him.

"What a strange mood you are in to-day!" she said.

"Yes. I hope you will be patient with me."

The *prima donna*, or somebody else, was late that afternoon, and the overture had not begun when they arrived. As soon as they were seated in the box, he said, abruptly:

"Mrs. Clifton, have you ever thought much about the real mysteries of life, such as—love, for instance?"

"A little."

"Have you reached any conclusion as to what it is?"

"None that satisfies both reason and sentiment."

He leaned toward her with a light in his eyes—a look difficult to describe, but born of the sudden discovery that here was a woman who could really see through more than one facet of Truth's many-sided prism. He had found few such women.

"It is impossible for me to chatter commonplaces to-day," he said. "Can we not lay aside the formal mask for this one afternoon, and really talk—not as conventional man to conventional woman, and *vice versa*, but as one human being to another? I am so tired of glittering unrealities! I want to touch something genuine, if it is only the lame expression of an intangible idea. Am I very incoherent?"

"No, I understand you perfectly."

"Thank you. Oh, if I were sure of it I would go down on my knees right here in this opera box and give thanks to such gods as I am still able to believe in."

"You doubt, then?"

"It is too good to be true, that's all." He was silent for a moment; then he said, looking straight into her eyes:

"Would you be shocked and repelled, I wonder, if you really had the power to look deep into a man's mind and heart, and should find there very unbeautiful things?"

"Such as——?"

"Oh, all sorts of unholy thoughts—doubt, cynicism, recklessness, forbidden desires. Above all, the latter, insidiously lifting their wicked heads in the most sacred places."

Just then the orchestra began to play the first bars of that wonderful "Tannhäuser" overture, and the two listened in silence for a while. Louella Clifton's evil genius may possibly have influenced the opera management in the selection of that particular music-drama for that particular afternoon. "Tannhäuser" may prove rather disturbing under even the most ordinary circumstances.

After a minute or two of silence Homan said:

"You haven't answered my question, Mrs. Clifton—or have you forgotten it?"

"Oh, no! You spoke of doubt as an unbeautiful thing. Who was it said:

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds?"

"And cynicism, recklessness, forbidden desires—what of those?"

"It seems to me," she said, slowly, "that when a man of sensitive and poetical temperament, like you, feels the sharp teeth of cynicism gnawing at his heart, the most probable supposition is that the feeling has grown out of the pain of a disappointed hope or a shattered ideal. You are generally the reverse of cynical. Therefore, I know that someone has hurt

you to-day. Of course, it was a woman—that goes without saying. Was it any of my friends?"

"No."

"I am glad."

"Why?"

"It would be difficult to give a formal reason."

"It is very kind of you," he said, "to attribute the diseased condition of my mind to the pain of a shattered ideal. I was never very gentle in self-judgment, and I should have said that I was suffering from wounded vanity." There was a note of pain in the bitterness of his tone that brought a sympathetic gleam into her eyes.

"Poor boy!" she said, with a long glance that was very tender and half-maternal. "You are suffering, and I am very sorry."

"Does unhappiness ever make you utterly reckless, Mrs. Clifton?"

"You may be surprised to hear that I have been so unhappy to-day as to be capable of almost any degree of imprudence, provided it carried with it the boon of forgetfulness."

"Ah! you, too? And I have always thought you so happy!"

She laughed, a trifle bitterly.

"Because I smile, doubtless, and chatter airy nothings to hair-brained people, and wear diamonds, and have my box at the opera."

"What a farce our social life is, Mrs. Clifton—what a tiresome, over-acted farce!"

Just then the curtain rose on the splendid scene of the Venusberg, and the chorus of sirens warbled their canorous invitations to the delight of love. Homan and Mrs. Clifton sat in silence, busy with their own uneasy thoughts, listening to what is probably the most deliciously sensuous music ever written.

She sat crosswise in the box, looking at the stage, her left hand hanging at her side. After a little while she became conscious that the fingers of her companion were stealing around her own, and their gradually increasing pressure seemed to pray mutely for the little responsive squeeze which she gave them. Then

she quickly withdrew her hand. The contact with his feverish fingers sent a thrill up her arm, notwithstanding the protecting thickness of her glove. Not a word was spoken till the end of the scene. As the Venusberg faded from sight Homan drew a long breath.

"I think," he said, "that the fair goddess herself must have inspired Wagner in the composition of that music, possibly to revenge herself upon modern opera-going humanity for the defection of her beloved *Tannhäuser*. What a strange world the opera world is! The illusion of that Venusberg scene and the music have carried me so far away from my commonplace existence into the realm of the imagination that I am in doubt as to which is the real world. Are you really the stately Mrs. Clifton? or are you one of those sirens, only masquerading in a modern gown?"

"Imagine, if you will," she answered, laughing a trifle nervously, "that I am one of the sirens, only masquerading as a *fin de siècle* woman. I would not mar a poet's fair illusion, though all my own lie shattered in the dust."

"Ah, but you are bitter to-day! Shall we listen to the rest of this act?"

Mrs. Clifton nodded acquiescence, but, music-lover though she was, she did not listen. It was pleasanter to sit and watch the profile of her companion and think all sorts of delightful, impossible things.

When the curtain went down he said: "Would you like to walk about a little?"

"No, let us sit here and talk."

"I warned you, remember, that I should not discuss conventional subjects."

"I am a trifle weary of that sort of thing myself, Mr. Homan."

"Would you think me presumptuous," he said, "if I should refer to a strange remark you made a little while ago? It interested me. May I not know what has made you unhappy?"

As he leaned forward to look into

her eyes he was surprised to see in them the swimming brilliancy of unshed tears.

"Poor little girl! Would you rather I should talk about something else?"

There was the vibrant note of true sympathy in his voice, and it moved her as nothing else had done in a long time. She let her eyes rest on his face, lingering on each feature with a tenderness that was strangely akin to a warmer feeling than the *camaraderie* she professed.

"I wonder," she said, slowly, "I wonder if you would understand me if I should try to tell why I—why—" Her voice trembled and stopped.

"I think so, Mrs. Clifton. I have sounded the depths myself within the last few days."

"But have you ever felt the pain that comes of fearing that one whom you love is growing indifferent to you?"

"Yes; not only of fearing, but knowing, with the dumb agony of certainty, that the gates of my little heaven were closing on me forever. But you, child? I don't understand how it is. You love your husband?"

"Yes; I have loved him faithfully for more than ten years."

"And you have never loved anyone else?"

"No—oh, never!"

"Ah, little woman, I understand. But are you sure that you are not mistaken?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know why I am talking to you like this, Emil Homan, but I should have died if I hadn't told somebody, and there isn't another human being in the world whom I would trust—there isn't anybody else to whom I would so unveil myself. Some instinct tells me that you are my friend."

"Thank you, dear. I appreciate a confidence of that sort from a woman like you, and I wish there was something I could do to help you."

"Of course there isn't."

"Unfortunately. There never is anything one can do in such a case."

She raised her eyes to his, and into their brown depths came the look that he had seen there once or twice before—the expression of grieved and wistful appeal that came into his little sister's eyes sometimes when she was very tired and longed to be assured that her big brother loved her.

Notwithstanding certain glaring faults and weaknesses of character there was a vein of true tenderness in Emil Homan, and the high-strung, sensitive temperament that made him so susceptible to pain carried with it the rare gift of sympathetic insight into the suffering of others. It is the poetical temperament—the highest gift and the curse of the gods. Somehow, his heart went out to the little woman beside him in a wave of sympathy. He had never thought very much about her before, except as one of the many charming women of his acquaintance—a dainty, tactful, appreciative creature, and a great admirer of his work. He realized that afternoon, for the first time, that she was a woman who could love and suffer. He wondered—then he put the thought away. What a crazy humor he was in that afternoon!

Roused from his reverie by some unimportant remark of his companion, he threw a quick glance at her. How pretty she was! And how strange that he had never before observed the purity of her pink-and-white skin or the fascinating way in which the brown hair waved backward from her little ear! He felt a sudden desire to kiss her. Her handkerchief had fallen to the floor, and he bent to pick it up, held it for a moment in his hand, then, with a quick breath, buried his face in the dainty bit of muslin and lace. It exhaled a faint perfume that seemed to run through his veins like electricity.

She looked at him in surprise. His face had grown suddenly pale, and he gave her back the handkerchief without a word. She wondered why her heart began to beat so hard; and she became conscious of a feeling of contentment that pervaded her whole being and was gradually merged into

a wave of strange, inexplicable happiness that swept her along with it, frightened and only half-resisting.

The curtain went up on the second act, showing the court of the Landgrave and the preparation for the Tournament of Song. Neither of them paid much attention to the scene, though the music beat on their ears with a rhythmic, insistent appeal. She had heard "*Tannhäuser*" many times, and it was not new to him. It served as a strangely fitting accompaniment to the psychological drama that was playing itself out in that opera box.

Dir, Göttin der Liebe, soll mein Lied
ertönen,

Gesungen laut sei jetzt dein Preis von
mir!

Dein süßer Reiz ist Quelle alles Schönen,
Und jedes holde Wunder stammt von
dir!

Wer dich mit Gluth in seine Arme
geschlossen,

Was Liebe ist, kennt er, nur er allein!

Armsel'ge, die ihr Liebe nie genossen,

Zieht hin! Zieht in den Berg der Venus
ein!

As *Tannhäuser* sang this the wild music of his cry found echo in their hearts.

"How divinely that man sings!" murmured Homan. "Poor *Tannhäuser*! I always want to join my voice to that of the gentle *Elizabeth* in his defense. What do those bread-and-milk bards know about love, anyway?"

"You are very wicked, Mr. Homan. I agree with the bread-and-milk bards."

"So do I—sometimes, but not this afternoon."

"I wonder," she said, "where you passed the morning."

She did not look at him, but fixed her downcast eyes on her handkerchief, which she was twisting into a tight little ball with nervous, unsteady fingers. There was an awkward silence, then he said:

"I shall not tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want to."

She looked him straight in the eyes now.

"You were with some woman?"

"Yes."

"Does she love you?" Her lips trembled as they formed the question.

"I feel this afternoon as if no human being in the world loved me. It isn't a very pleasant feeling, so please don't turn the knife around in my heart by talking about it."

"It seems to me," she said, with a laugh that, for all its music, had not a spark of mirth—"it seems to me that neither of us is in very high spirits to-day. I don't know what to do for the entertainment of my lugubrious guest."

"If we were anywhere else I would put my head in your lap and beg you to stroke my hair. I feel as if I could forget the world and everything in it under the spell of those kind fingers."

His mesmeric eyes were fixed on hers. As she glanced involuntarily at his mop of dull-black hair, her hands tingled to bury themselves in it, to touch the flesh of that thin, dark face, to press it against her own. A wave of red swept from her forehead to her chin, for it was clear, from the look in his eyes, that he knew what she was thinking.

"Thank you so much for wanting to," he whispered. "If we dwelt in a forest, now, instead of in Manhattan, I should carry you off to my lair. Somehow, I dread the evening. I might go to the club and drink, of course; but my gloomy thoughts always refuse to be drowned in whiskey. There is but one anodyne that has power to bring forgetfulness to me."

"And what is that?"

"You won't be offended?"

"No."

"The pressure of a sympathetic woman's arms around my neck."

She made no answer. Her thoughts were in a tumult. She was frightened, yet fascinated, by a wild, mad idea. Though she tried to put it away, it would not be banished.

During all her twenty-eight years Louella had never done anything that she might not have told her own mother. But at that moment she was

toying with temptation in its most insidious and most dangerous form. She had become suddenly aware that she was on the verge of falling in love with this man, and the knowledge did not bring the self-condemnation that should have gone with it. On the contrary, she was conscious of a thrill of inexplicable happiness. Was it possible that he could care for her? The very doubt which she could not but feel only served to stimulate the strange, new-born emotion. Then, above all other thoughts, came once more the wild, sweet desire to touch with her hands the strange, sensitive face that was so near her own. It became a hunger—a need.

"Mr. Homan," she said, "will you come home to dinner with me?"

"Thank you. But would it not be better for you to dine with me instead? Oh, I forget! You will be expecting your husband."

"My husband will probably dine out this evening."

"Then come with me."

"Very well, I will."

The last act of the opera seemed very long, though it is by far the shortest of the three. Neither of them paid much attention to the stage, though they said little to each other. Finally he asked:

"Where would you like to dine?"

"I am indifferent. Take me wherever you please."

"No; don't say that, for in that case——"

"Well?"

"In that case I should take you home to my den."

"And where is that?"

"Away up town, in the Segremonite."

"A bachelor apartment house?"

"Not exclusively. Several families live there. Oh, it is very proper, if you wish to go."

He had not the faintest idea that she would, and had he been in a less reckless humor he would not have dared suggest it.

"I wonder," she said, with a half-smile, while a puzzled look came over

her face—"I wonder if I should dare."

"Why not?"

"Oh, because!"

"A woman's reason."

She sat toying with her lorgnette, a soft pink in her cheeks and a strange light in her eyes. As he looked at her it slowly dawned on him that she really wished to go, and that her hesitation was but the struggle between prudence and inclination. The slight flush and the doubtful timidity of manner made her seem very girlish, so girlish that he wondered whether she realized the significance the world would put upon the thing she contemplated. And he ardently wished her to go. She was so pretty, so dainty, so magnetic, and feminine sympathy and tenderness are balm to a lacerated masculine heart.

He wondered if she had ever spent the evening alone with a man in his apartment, and longed to ask her; but it was an impossible question, of course, and quite needless, too, for he could not get rid of the idea that she did not realize what she was doing. It fretted him. He was what the world would probably call a very immoral man, but such men are not necessarily devoid of conscience; and the artistic insight that had made Emil Homan famous as poet and writer of psychological tales rendered perfectly clear to him the true character of Mrs. Clifton. He liked her for the truthful look in her clear eyes, with their strange resemblance to those of his little sister Marion; for her natural sincerity and kindliness, and for her sympathetic understanding of him and his work. But until that afternoon he had never thought of her as a woman he might kiss. There was not a grain of vanity or disrespect for her in the knowledge that he could make love to her if he chose. It was simply a fact, obvious and impersonal as the daylight. He knew, too, that he wished to make love to her, and that if he took her home to dine at his place he should make very ardent love to her indeed. And he knew that she knew he knew it.

He was startled from his reverie by the sound of her voice:

"Should I see anyone up there if I went?"

"Not a soul; not even the waiter from the restaurant. We will have the trays left at the door, and I shall serve you myself."

"How delightful! I think I will go."

The curtain went down, and the audience slowly filed out into the sunshine. Mrs. Clifton glanced at her little jeweled watch.

"It is still too early for dinner," she said. "What shall we do?"

"If you don't object to riding in a hansom," he suggested, "we might take a turn around the Park."

"Of course I don't object to a hansom. There is an apparently idle one on the corner."

He hailed the driver.

"Around the Park," he said, as he assisted her in.

It was a glorious afternoon in early Spring; one of those days when it requires but little stretch of the imagination to see a chain of nymphs dancing over the tender green on the grassy slopes of the Park; when, if one listens intently and in the proper spirit, one can hear the far-off music of Pan's pipe and the gentle murmur of all the tender green things of the earth restlessly bestirring themselves after their long sleep.

The breeze blew softly on their faces as they sped along, and Homan lay back with a little sigh of content. He had only to turn his head slightly to see the profile of his companion silhouetted against the blue of the Spring sky. His eyes lingered tenderly on the outline of the little Grecian nose, the soft, full lips and the round chin. She was so fair, so tender, so gracious! And he was to have the comfort of her society for a whole evening! His heart began to beat violently, and the fingers of his left hand sought those of her right and crushed them in a strong clasp.

"This is too good to be true, Mrs. Clifton," he said. "I expect to wake

with a start presently and find it has been all a dream."

There was a far-away look in her eyes, the muscles of her face were tense, and the fingers of her left hand were clasped tightly around the casing of the cab window. At the sound of his voice she started and turned toward him.

"A penny for your thoughts, dear," he said. "Honest, now!"

"They were not a bit romantic, but I will tell you what they were. I was thinking of my little girl, and wondering whether the nurse would remember to give her her cough medicine before she goes to bed."

It was said so simply and naturally, and with much tender solicitude, that Homan's heart went out to her as it had never done before.

"The child isn't ill, is she?" he asked, stirring uneasily.

"Oh, she has only a slight cold. It isn't anything serious. But I wonder——"

"You wonder what, dear?"

"I wonder if I am not a little bit crazy."

"Is it crazy to want to go home with me?"

"Isn't it?"

"Perhaps so. Are you sorry?"

"I don't know. I am frightened—afraid."

"Of what?"

"I am not sure just what I am afraid of. It is of you, I think, or possibly myself."

He leaned forward and looked earnestly into her face. She turned her brown eyes toward him, and once more he saw in their troubled depths the look of his little sister Marion. He set his lips together very tightly, and then, looking out across the trees rather than at her, he said:

"Mrs. Clifton, I am not going to take you up to my place to-night, because I know you would be sorry and unhappy, and that would make me sorry and unhappy, too. You are one of the best and truest little women in the world, and I am not a very good man. I have not behaved very well to you this afternoon, and I can't ex-

plain myself in any way that you will understand. Words are such weak things when one soul tries to reveal itself to another! You have idealized me, child; I am not in the least what you think, and I am not worthy of the confidence you would place in me. I am too fond of you to be safely trusted in a solitude *à deux*, but at the same time too hopelessly miserable to make you happy for even one day. Yet you will never know what your sympathy and kindness have done for me this afternoon. It must be in such moods as mine that men do irreparable things with pistols. Now I shall tell the driver to take us to a restaurant down town."

She put out her hand.

"Take me home," she said.

"But won't you come and dine with me?"

"No."

"Mrs. Clifton, you are not offended?"

"No; but I want to go home."

He would have tried to persuade her, but she stopped him. Her lips were trembling and her eyes were full of tears.

"Please don't make this any harder for me than is necessary," she said. "I haven't realized till this moment what a traitor I am. I just can't go and dine at a restaurant. It is impossible. I am too unhappy."

"Dearie, don't! I am so sorry!"

"Oh, it isn't your fault, and there isn't anybody else in the world who would have been so—so kind to me. Tell the man to take us home."

They were then at Fifty-ninth street, and in a few minutes the hansom stopped before the Clifton house. He sprang out and gave his hand to her.

"May I come to see you to-morrow?" he asked.

"No, please don't. Good-bye."

She went up the steps and into the house, and when the door had closed behind her he turned and re-entered the cab. As it rolled down the Avenue he took off his hat and passed his fingers through his long hair. He was perplexed and uneasy. He un-

derstood, somehow, that he had done a clumsy thing, yet Mrs. Clifton's sudden change of manner puzzled him. In every poet there is a deep strain of the woman element, and what made this particular man so dangerous to the other sex was his remarkable insight into the secrets of their hearts. But it is not given to any masculine mind—not even that of the poet—to fully understand the mystery of the wonderful creature called woman. And though he puzzled over it for several blocks, he could not find a satisfactory explanation of Mrs. Clifton's sudden fit of melancholy. Then the burden of his own special woe settled once more upon his spirit, driving away all thought of Mrs. Clifton and of everything else but itself. Oh, the boundless egotism of love and pain!

Meanwhile, Mrs. Clifton was walking up and down her own room, restlessly beating her gloved hands together and muttering to herself:

"What a fool you are, Louella Clifton! Oh, what a fool you are!"

She had not taken off her hat or the little French cape of velvet, lace and fur. She was moving aimlessly about, mechanically changing the position of a chair or a piece of drapery, with that strange, preoccupied attention to detail so often observed in those laboring under strong emotion, when there came a sharp tap on the door. Steadying herself with an effort, she turned the knob and stood face to face with her husband.

"I heard you open the street door a little while ago," he said, "and I want to talk to you. May I come in?"

"Of course."

As he entered the room he closed the door carefully behind him.

"Why, you haven't taken off your things yet! Are you very tired? Let me help you."

His large, cool hands unfastened the veil, took out the jeweled pins that held the hat, untied the long ribbons of the cape and drew off the gloves as easily as the deft fingers of her little French maid could have performed the service. In the old

days he had laughingly acted as her *femme de chambre* many, many times.

Tossing the wraps on the sofa, he gently drew her toward a large, soft chair by the window, and sat down with her in his arms. He was too much absorbed in what he was going to say to notice how still she was and how cold were the little hands that he had himself placed about his neck.

"I was a bear to you this morning, Louella," he said, lifting her pale, frightened face to his and pressing a long kiss on her lips, "a veritable bear; but I was in such terrible trouble that if I had come near you, or kissed you good-bye, I should have broken down completely and told you everything—that we have been standing on the verge of ruin for many weeks. And so I should have made you needlessly unhappy, and should have spoiled your afternoon at the opera."

"Henry!"

She raised her head with a startled exclamation, and sat looking at him with wide, terrified eyes.

"Oh, it is all over now, dear, and I have weathered the storm at last; but we have had a terrible time in the Street—a terrible time! I have seen it coming and have tried to do what I could to protect you in case the worst should happen. You remember those papers I called your attention to before putting them in the safe in my room? I was bound you should have something, my poor little helpless thing, and I transferred to you the deeds of this house and of our place on the Hudson. It wasn't much, but it was all I could do; and I promised your father the day he died that you should always be protected. You know he didn't approve of my speculating; but in no other way could I have been able to give you the luxuries you have had."

She raised one hand and laid it on his head, seeing for the first time the silvery threads that lay thick in the gold of his hair.

"You see I bear marks of the strain I have been through," he said, with a short, mirthless laugh. "Six weeks

ago I hadn't a white hair, and now you couldn't count them. Oh, my dear, dear little wife! I have been in hell these weeks whenever I have thought of your future!"

He buried his face in her neck, and his shoulders were shaken by great, tremulous sighs.

"Henry, why didn't you tell me? Oh, why didn't you tell me?"

"And make you suffer as I have suffered? I loved you too well, dear. It was better I should bear it alone. But at night, sometimes, when I could not sleep from anxiety, I have stolen in to look at you—softly, so that you should not wake—and I have prayed beside your bed here—I, who thought I didn't believe in any God!"

He strained her to him, pressing tender kisses on her eyes, her hair, her lips. As she sank closer into his arms she began to cry, softly at first, with a tremulous catching of the breath; then, as the full meaning of this man's watchful protection and love swept over her, her whole body was shaken by terrible sobs. She tried to break away from him, and when he held her fast, gazing with alarmed solicitude into her tear-dimmed eyes, she beat her hands together, clenching them till the nails cut into the flesh, murmuring brokenly between her sobs that she was unworthy of his love, that she was a wicked, wicked woman and unfit to live.

"Louella, my dear child! I don't understand what is the matter with you. Tell me! You *must* tell me!"

With stifled sobs she poured out to him all that was in her heart. How his growing absorption in business had made her think him indifferent to her, how unhappy she had been, and what a desert life had seemed without his love. Then she told him the whole story of the afternoon with Emil Homan, fairly and clearly, her narrative colored only by the refine-

ment and delicacy of touch that were characteristic of her every thought and act, and ending with the despairing cry: "I thought you did not love me any longer!"

He listened as if dazed, and after she had ceased no word was spoken for what seemed a long time. Then he asked, hoarsely:

"Are you in love with Homan?"

"No, Henry! no! And I wish never to see him again! One hair of your head is more to me——"

The pressure of his lips interrupted the passionate assurance that his heart desired. Not a word of censure did he speak—either of her or of Homan; for, notwithstanding his inward rage at the poet, he knew his fellow-men too well not to understand that the happy fact of Louella's dining at home with him that evening, instead of tête-à-tête with Homan at the Segremonte, was not a matter of course, by any means.

They had sat in silence for some time, when Louella raised her head from her husband's shoulder and said:

"Henry, do you remember that this is the anniversary of our marriage day?"

"Yes, little girl," he answered, assuming a light tone in order to veil from her the tumult of his thoughts, "and I have been thinking we ought to take a second wedding trip. I made a great *coup* in the Street to-day, which not only pulled me out of the pit where I have been these last six weeks, but put me away ahead in the game. What do you say to a three months' vacation in Europe?"

"Oh, Henry! I should like it better than anything else in the world!"

Then, with a new happiness in their faces, they talked over plans and possibilities for the coming journey, till the nurse brought in their little golden-haired girl to kiss papa and mamma good-night.



THE DREADFUL LADY FITZEDGAR

By Elizabeth Duer

WE are told that human action is ever determined by complex motives, but mine was not when I accepted Bertha Brayton's invitation to spend Labor Day and the preceding Saturday and Sunday with her at Belmont, her place on the Hudson. I accepted because I was bored beyond sleep!

After sending my letter I had to arrange my ideas into motives which would seem forcible enough to my conscience to excuse the fact that I had committed my husband to the visit without allowing him a choice. But then, Mompy never allows *me* a choice; he telegraphs, Friday after Friday, "Expect me by fast train. Send trap to meet us at Golf Club 7.30. Bringing down three men." Signed, "Mompessen Leigh."

I order the best dinner the Ocean Hampton market affords, have the three guests' rooms made ready with lavender-scented linen, put on my prettiest frock and then kick my slipper heels till hungry nature makes me feel like slapping my belated guests, and Mompy's hearty, "Here we are at last!" seems little short of an affront.

Sometimes they ask me to bathe with them if the surf is not too rough, but usually it is polo and golf every day and all day, and the possibility of my being included, even as a looker-on, is precluded by the fact that they and the groom fill the trap.

So when a chance came which allowed me for once to be the guest, is it strange that I put it out of Mompy's power to say "No?" I also had my turn at telegraphing. "Expect me by fast train Friday afternoon. Have

accepted for both an invitation to stay with Braytons from Saturday to Tuesday."

I had my best gowns packed. I told the servants they might give a ball if they would promise to have nothing stronger than coffee to drink and would not burn the house down; and then, elated by my own daring, and just a trifle nervous at having received no answer from Mompy, I stepped on board the afternoon express and found my dear friend, Susan Jones, in the chair next to mine.

It is unnecessary to note, in connection with the well-ordered road that keeps the villages of Long Island in touch with the metropolis, that we steamed into Long Island City as the clock struck the appointed hour. There stood George Jones awaiting his wife, his broad, sunburned face dimpling with smiles; but my six feet of beautiful, muscular humanity was not conspicuously present. I reflected, however, that Mompy was a busy and very successful man, and I could not expect to cut his working hours shorter than was absolutely necessary; he would meet me on the New York side and thereby save twenty minutes of his valuable time.

I was so busy making this calculation that I roused myself with an effort to understand what George Jones was saying to me.

"You and Mompy must dine with us at the Waldorf, and then we'll go to a roof-garden or take automobiles and ride out to Claremont—just as you like. When Sue comes to town she expects to be entertained, don't you, old lady?" This with a look of indulgent admiration at his wife.

I accepted with alacrity. Mompy adores George Jones and professes to admire Susan, but maybe he finds her a trifle heavy in hand. Still, this whole expedition was mine, designed by me for my own refreshment, and Mompy had no voice in the matter, only "part and lot," like Simon the Sorcerer.

I must confess I felt a little dashed when the boat reached Thirty-fourth street to find no trace of my husband, but fortunately I had been reticent about my anticipations, so the Joneses did not know the keen mortification that stepped with me into the hansom.

"Half - past seven — Waldorf!" shouted George Jones, as I drove off. I nodded violently, and then I blew my nose; these sudden changes of temperature from a hot train to the cool evening air are apt to give one a slight cold.

As I drew up at the house I noticed the woman in charge was sitting at the open basement window, reading, but that all the other front windows were shut and barred, as if Mompy hated fresh air and prudently denied himself to thieves.

"Isn't Mr. Leigh at home yet?" I asked, as the woman unlocked the front door, her face beaming with the pleasure she felt at having another human with whom to exchange a word. She shook her head.

"No, ma'am, Mr. Leigh ain't been home since Toosday, but I thought as maybe he'd be coming to-night, as a city express has just brought one of his bags full of clothes for the wash."

Decidedly, things were not turning out my way. I almost wished I had been a little less precipitate, but then it was too soon to be anxious; any second I might hear Mompy's key turn in the latch, and then—how pleased he would be! He would say, "Dear old girl, this *is* nice—why haven't you done it before? I declare the house looks like itself, now you are here!"

I had brought one small dress-case with me in the hansom. I took a bath and dressed, and, looking at my

watch, found it was half-past seven. Waiting any longer was out of the question, so I sent the caretaker for a cab, and five minutes brought me to the Waldorf.

The time for reticence had passed. I had to tell the Joneses of my forsaken condition, and found instant comfort in their kind, common-sense view of the situation.

"He's out at Ardsley, playing golf," said Susan.

"Or your telegram has gone astray," said George. "Eat your dinner, and we'll have some fun. Ghosts don't take steps to insure having their clothes washed, so he is all right, at all events." This hardened my heart. I must confess some fears for Mompy's safety had flitted through my brain.

"George has a table in the Palm Room," said Susan. "Isn't that music from 'Hansel and Gretel' too exquisite for an accompaniment of knives and forks? I love that Hungarian band!" George looked gratified.

"A bisque of lima beans, Sue, and then a Spanish mackerel," he began.

Here I felt hungry. "And a plain Long Island duckling, George; no messy things, please—and—" but I got no further.

Preceded by Oscar and followed by two waiters, who nearly trod on each other's heels in their anxiety to get to the reserved table in time to pull out the chairs for such distinguished guests, came Mompy, with a woman and a man. Had any confirmation of the nationality of the two strangers been necessary, her low-cut bodice and rather frowsy masses of light hair would have proclaimed it; but no one could doubt that they were English—one feels the difference in type without being able to lay the finger on the points of dissimilarity.

No menu was handed to Mompy—evidently the dinner had been pre-ordered. He looked round with the air of a person searching for distinguished compatriots to commend to the notice of his friends. Presently his eye fell upon George, and his face

lit up with one of his sweetest smiles—dear Mompy! no one has such a smile!—and then it traveled on to me; and I hate to write it, but astonished embarrassment was marked in every feature. He excused himself to his guests and hurried to my side.

"My dear child, what does it mean? Where are you going? Is anything wrong?"

"I am going to the Braytons' to-morrow," I answered. "I telegraphed my plans to you yesterday, and forgive me if I mention that something seems wrong, but not with me."

He ignored the latter part of my speech.

"Going to the Braytons', are you? So am I. I promised Brayton yesterday. I found there was virtually nothing to do downtown, so I went off with him on his yacht for a day or two, and we got back only an hour ago. He had to meet these people, Lord and Lady Charles Fitzedgar, as he had asked them to dine here and go to the theatre, and later they are going on board the yacht for the night. He wants to sail rather early to-morrow, as they have never seen the Hudson, and he thought they would enjoy it more before the sun gets too hot."

"Where is Mr. Brayton," I asked, coldly.

"Fell up those slimy steps at Twenty-sixth street as we were leaving the launch and smashed the hinge of his knee. Hurt him so he stopped to see McTorture about it, and he did him up in plaster and sent him back to the yacht. That's why I'm in charge." Waving his hand toward the Fitzedgars, and finding that they were hungrily eyeing their empty plates, he took a step in their direction.

"I suppose I shall see you to-morrow at the Braytons'. What train do you take?"

"Mompy!" I exclaimed, stiff with indignation. "Do you mean that you are going to leave me alone in that dreary house to-night?"

"Don't be foolish, Mary!" he said, with some asperity. "You will not

be alone; the caretaker will look after you. I can't leave these people; they couldn't find their way to the yacht, and besides, Brayton is suffering too much to be left."

"I shall get on very nicely," I answered, as well as my trembling lips would frame the words. "But one thing you must do, in common decency—introduce me to your friends as soon as dinner is over. I shall wait for you in the corridor." He looked visibly embarrassed.

"It is quite unnecessary," he said, hesitatingly; "but, of course, you would have to meet them to-morrow. Very well—yes—very kind of you to think of it." And he was gone.

How much of our conversation Susan and George overheard I could not guess, but at the end of dinner they at once acceded to my request to wait for Mompy in the corridor, and he presently appeared with his titled attachment. Lord Charles hastened toward me with outstretched hand.

"I cannot wait for an introduction, Mrs. Leigh," he said. "Your husband and I have spent many months together in old times on my father's yacht, fishing off the Norway coast and leading an idle, good-for-nothing life, such as boys will. I hope he has had the grace to at least name me to you as among his oldest friends."

I managed a rather sickly smile, while the vision of a pair of massive English candlesticks and Lord Charles's card faintly stirred my memory. I must have said what was fitting, but I forget what, for I only heard and saw Mompy. He was saying, in a cold, hard voice, "Mary, I wish to introduce you to Lady Charles Fitzedgar"—and not a word more to give the conversation a little shove.

I mumbled something about the unpleasantness of going on board the yacht after dark and my distress at Mr. Brayton's mishap, and Lady Charles, who was of a towsled loveliness beyond description, barely glanced at me while she remarked, indifferently, that it was "exceedingly tiresome." Some further observations of mine about the size of

the Waldorf and its cuisine drew forth the answer that it seemed to her as overcrowded as a rabbit warren, but that, as she understood all Americans prefer hotel life, perhaps she was unwise to say so.

Mompy was almost dancing, in his anxiety to get off to the theatre, but as soon as he had succeeded in getting the Fitzedgars started toward the door, he flew back to me.

"I wish you would give up this visit to the Braytons', Mary," he said, while a flush of annoyance overspread his yachting complexion. "The heat up the Hudson will make you ill. Why in thunder you wanted to accept the invitation beats me!"

I never knew Mompy coarse before. "Why in thunder!" and "beats me!" He reminded me of those men called brokers, who yell "bulls and bears" at each other.

I did not answer, and walked off to join George and Susan, who had met some long-lost friends and were oblivious to the fact that my interview with the peerage was over.

Susan kindly noticed that I looked tired, and suggested that they should drop me at home on their way to the roof-garden; Mompy would doubtless be relieved to find she had made me go to bed early. Other people's sins make us such hypocrites! I confessed to being tired, and intimated that Mompy in his rôle of host might be rather late in joining me, but that he would be glad to know I had not waited up for him.

I had an awful night. Once, for as much as ten minutes, I stopped regretting that I had married Mompy, because a mouse ran over my pillow, and I felt my rage diverted to the caretaker, who must be a careless person and very dirty, and should certainly have provided herself with a cat or a trap, or whatever is considered necessary to exterminate vermin. Oh! why was I such a friendless person? Other women had parents alive who would take care of them when their husbands proved unkind—or at any rate, they had sisters who would understand, whereas I had only

Susan Jones and Bertha Brayton, and was too proud to tell them! I must have slept after the mouse episode, for I woke in the morning in glorious health, blazing with anger, and determined to see the tragedy played to the end.

When I got out of the 3.20 express at Dutchess, I found the Brayton brougham waiting for me and the footman, a new servant, in the act of presenting a little three-cornered note. "Mrs. Mompessen Leigh?" he inquired; and I took the note with a sigh that the superscription was mine indeed. The note said:

DEAR MARY:

You will find poor papa in the brougham. You know he is quite harmless, and we have not allowed him to take even his cane. His trained nurse was taken suddenly ill yesterday, and although we have sent for another, he has not yet arrived; so as driving is the dear old gentleman's one pleasure, I have ventured to send him as far as the station to meet you, knowing that your friendship would stand the test. The house is full of strangers, and I am almost demented.

Yours ever,

BERTHA.

A drive of over four miles with a paretic old gentleman is hardly lively, no matter how amiable the sufferer may be, and there was something ominous in Bertha's assurance that his cane had been left behind. Satan was uncommonly busy with my affairs in these days. I began to wish to "thunder," like Mompy, that I had stopped at home.

I have always known Bertha since we were children, and our parents were friends before us, but I never knew why old Mr. Babbitt had a wooden leg. Once, after my marriage, I asked Mompy, but he only said he guessed his own leg had gone back on him, which sounded as if that member had been replaced on account of a habit it had acquired of walking backward; but I presume Mompy meant only that it had something unusual the matter with it. At all events, its loss did not prevent Mr. Babbitt from always being to the fore in every stock market deal. However,

his enormous fortune had now been placed by the courts entirely at Bertha's disposal, as she was his only child, and the poor old gentleman had been declared of unsound mind. To Bertha's credit, I must add that her father's happiness was her most earnest care in life.

As I stepped into the brougham I perceived that Mr. Babbitt was taking an afternoon siesta, and that his wooden leg was turned at right angles to his person and was occupying such portions of the carriage as would naturally have accommodated my own understandings. His head nodded forward on his chest, and his tall silk hat would certainly have rolled off if he had not seen fit to wear it, like a bonnet, at the back of his ears.

The horses started with a series of bounds that disturbed Mr. Babbitt, and he opened his eyes and regarded me with a look of mild inquiry.

"Do I know you, my dear?" he asked.

I hastened to say I was Mary Marshall, hoping the use of my maiden name might waken some chord of memory, but he took no notice. Presently he spoke again.

"Did you come from New York, and did you bring an evening paper?" He read the papers during all his waking hours, and apparently extracted some information from them, for occasionally a reflection of current events was discernible in the zig-zag of his conversation.

"How are they getting on with that railway to the moon they are building down there?" and a backward jerk of his thumb indicated New York. "I see they have a son of my old friend Parkley Barsons as their engineer. Folly, folly! Waste of good material. Easy enough to get there, but damned hard to get back; so they'll find—so they'll find!" and he wagged his head and chuckled as if rejoicing that none of his money had gone into such an investment.

Another mile passed, and Mr. Babbitt had his head craned far out of the window in full enjoyment of the view.

Suddenly he withdrew it and began nervously feeling for something, which I conjectured to be his cane, and coming upon the handle of my parasol, he grasped it and dealt a succession of crashing blows against the glass of the front window. Fortunately, the glass was thick and stood the onslaught. The carriage came to a standstill and the footman appeared at Mr. Babbitt's window.

"Get a bouquet for the lady!" he said, in imperious tones. "Don't you know your business?"

"Where, sir?" asked the footman, his solemn young eyes thoughtfully scanning every inch of the colorless road.

"There, blockhead!" said Mr. Babbitt, pointing to a few spears of timothy; and the well-trained servant gathered it, tied it with a wisp of itself, and presented it to me. Mr. Babbitt sat very straight and smiled at me. He had not forgotten those little courtesies that come so gracefully from the country magnate to the town-bred guest.

We had now passed the lodge gates and were rapidly approaching Belmont when I received a stunning blow in the back of my neck. "Duck your head!" he screamed. "Do you want to be shot? There is a man behind that bush who shoots at a mark all day. If I hadn't pushed your head out of the way you would be dead now!"

My nerves were young, but they were beginning to fail me as we pulled up under the beautiful marble colonnade that formed the somewhat formal entrance to Belmont.

Several servants approached the carriage, one offering a crutch and a cane for Mr. Babbitt's selection. He permitted himself to be helped out, and as he placed the crutch under his arm he administered a dignified and gentle rebuke.

"The next time I drive, Edward—" the man's name happened to be Thomas—"you will be kind enough to see that my cane is not forgotten. My infirmities should make me an object of especial care in this house

and my convenience forestalled by every attention." And before you could count two, he had whipped the cane from the man's arm and dealt him such a stinging blow across his silken calves that an oath escaped the victim and he bounded into the front hall out of reach of that prop of age.

Fashionable vehicles of all kinds were drawn up under the trees of the front drive—automobiles, victorias, park phaetons. Evidently tea was in progress, and tea at Belmont was an important function, not only to the inmates but to the surrounding neighborhood, whose afternoon drives were apt to take in Bertha's hospitable rendezvous.

I followed the servant across the huge, cool drawing-room to the south portico, where Bertha was presiding at a tea table, which made few demands upon her skill. It was a warm day, and iced drinks were much more in request; the women sipping their orangeade and the men mixing their whiskey-and-soda with more reference to the length than the strength of their potions.

Bertha rose from the table and folded me in her strong, loving arms. How good her embrace seemed!

"Send them away," I whispered, glaring at the guests. "I want you all to myself."

"Don't be naughty, Mary," was all she said.

I do wish people would not treat me as if I were a child, and petulant. Heaven knows I have all the trials of a woman!

"I trust you had an uneventful drive," she said, with meaning, and I began pulling down the little rings of hair at the back of my neck to hide the red mark I was sure must still survive Mr. Babbitt's well-intentioned thump, answering that I was delighted to find her father so well. She appeared gratified, and our attention was soon claimed by the assembled company. Presently a voice behind me murmured:

"So you have come at last! Mompy was so non-committal about you that I was afraid you meant to

give out and go back to that sand-spit where you live."

Lord Charles drew his chair very close and interested himself in feeding Bertha's white Angora cat with bits of plum cake, while he plied me with question after question, in his charming English mumble, about the guests, domiciled or transient, as the case might be. I longed to ask where Mompy was, but felt too self-conscious, and while I hesitated the information was supplied in that prompt way which forces one to believe in telepathy.

"Mompy and my wife were here a moment ago, but they have disappeared in the direction of the river. I fancy they are booked for a sail before sunset. They have become great pals!"

Again that little clutch at my heart; could it be I was vulgarly jealous of my husband's attentions to this beautiful stranger?

I got up and followed Bertha into the drawing-room, where she was saying good-bye to the last of her afternoon guests, and together we watched the automobiles backing and filling and tearing up the front drive, then in a mad burst of speed frightening all the homeward bound horses they overtook.

"Leave all those stopping people to amuse each other, and come with me to my room," I entreated, and dear Bertha, with her resigned smile, led the way to a large room over the front door, the roof of the colonnade forming an upper piazza that ran far beyond my windows and was shared by the rooms on either side. My room faced west, and was of enormous size. There were doors communicating with the rooms to the north and south, and the inner corners, toward the corridor, were cut off to make, respectively, a private bathroom and a dress closet. The coloring of the walls was the softest rose relieved by white enameled woodwork, while furniture, bed and curtains were draped with a heavy chintz, over the white surface of which pink poppies with their gray-green

leaves had been liberally flung. The polished floor was partly hidden by faint green rugs, and the reposeful beauty of the whole was disturbed only by a bustling housemaid, detailed to wait upon me, and now busy unpacking my boxes.

Bertha sank into a chair by the window, dismissed the servant and at once began to retail her grievances; but I interrupted her to ask about Mr. Brayton's knee.

"Dick is doing fairly well," she answered, "and, at any rate, I am relieved of all responsibility, as McTorture is here. You see, papa's nurse was taken ill yesterday, and by sundown the village doctor was pretty sure it was appendicitis and wanted town advice, so I telephoned to McTorture and caught him in his office just when Dick was there getting his knee mended. He offered to bring McTorture up on the yacht the first thing in the morning, and the whole coincidence seemed providential. They have operated on poor Smith, and he is reacting very well, and the new nurse arrived a few minutes ago, so papa is not so much on my mind; but haven't I had enough to embitter life for the last twenty-four hours, and with all these people to be looked after?"

"Listen!" I said, eyeing Bertha fiercely, "don't you put McTorture near me at dinner. I can't bear these great surgeons. The professional way in which they handle their knife and fork takes my appetite away. Can't you make him eat with a spoon while he is here?"

"Dear Mary, what spirits you have!" she said, with an envious sigh.

I! Spirits! I believe I am becoming an arch-hypocrite, but, thank heaven, I have some reserve, which is a quality not much in evidence nowadays.

We lingered, talking, till the dusk made dressing impossible, and Bertha, ringing for lights, prepared to leave me to get ready for dinner. As she reached the door I found courage to ask, "Where is Mompy's room?"

"Right beside you," she answered,

vanishing and leaving me quite ignorant as to which side.

It never takes me long to dress, for my hair curls naturally and Mompy hates women who are pinned into their frocks, so mine are always in order; but I spun out the process till I was afraid I might keep dinner waiting, in the vain hope that I might hear a welcome knock at my door and that Mompy, alive to his sins, might come to ask my forgiveness; but evidently I did not yet understand my husband.

As I crossed the great hall I nearly ran into him. He was coming in from the garden, and as he walked he adjusted, with nice care, a gardenia in his buttonhole. What a beauty Mompy is in evening clothes! I gave a little gasp.

"Oh! you're here, are you?" he said, with a slight frown. "I had hoped that on reflection you might allow my wishes to have some weight in your decision."

"Quite the contrary," I answered, and with my head in the air I sailed before him into the drawing-room—not too much ahead of him, for it looks sweetly domestic for man and wife to come down to dinner together.

Dick Brayton and I hobbled in to dinner side by side. I should be afraid to act as master of Belmont for even one day, such unsound legs seem to go with that office, but Dick treated his misfortune as a joke. McTorture sat by Bertha, and I made faces at her whenever I dared, especially when he voluntarily chose to eat his ice cream with a spoon.

Dick's conversation was all of river thieves. They had visited his garden twice that very week, and the night before had made a clean sweep of the melon patch. They were getting so bold he knew they would try the house next, and, knee or no knee, he meant to be up and at them. Mompy and Lord Charles said he was a selfish sort of a person to keep private shooting preserves he was not willing to share with his guests, and then Mompy said he had a pistol of his

own and could look out for his own amusement. Just then I was again being sorry I married Mompy, so I said to myself I didn't care whether he shot burglars or bullfrogs.

Lord Charles sat on one side of me, and asked whether I had seen Mrs. Brayton's beautiful garden; then made me promise to go out for a walk after dinner.

It was a lovely night in early September. The moon, nearly full, was flooding the lawn and river and hills, and as Lord Charles and I paused for a moment under the colonnade to enjoy the western view, an enormous tow turned the bend of the river, the little steamer noisily leading the way and the long trail of lighted canal boats following, for all the world like an illuminated Mrs. Duck and her aquatic family.

Having feasted our eyes on the river, we rounded the house by the south portico and proceeded to the garden. Between Belmont and the low range of mountains that shuts in the valley of the Hudson on the east Bertha had allowed her fancy and her purse full swing. Near the house were ornamental pleasure grounds, with fountains and statuary and carved seats, groups of rare shrubs and dwarf trees, broad walks between ribbons of flowers; and further back, where the hill began to rise, was the garden, built on a series of terraces, and approachable from either end by a flight of marble steps. Here were the graperies and hothouses, here every flower and every vegetable that eye or palate could enjoy, not growing in wild confusion, and yet planted with a kind of informality that suggested Bertha, and not the gardener, as the creating spirit.

We gained the highest terrace, and I perched myself on the back of one of the stone sphinxes that guarded the top of the steps. Belmont lay below us like a huge snow palace shimmering in the moonshine. I was wondering what impression it was making on our English friends.

"A fine piece of modern architecture," said Lord Charles; "Mr. Bab-

bitt must have had a true love for the beautiful. Poor old boy! I hear he is too mad now to be allowed a free foot in his own place."

"His foot is free enough," I answered; "it comes off!"

Lord Charles stared. That sort of American smartness isn't *comme il faut*—I felt it myself and hastened to add: "The old gentleman had a great deal of poetry in his nature. You feel it in all the surroundings, and still more in the name he has given the place; he must have known and loved his 'Merchant.'"

"And did many princes come courting our Bertha?" he asked. "But of course they didn't, for the first would have guessed right. Our hostess is pure gold—heart and character and money bags—and too honest to allow her revered parent any misleading jugglery with the caskets. She would have made him pop his blessing into the golden box, and there Brayton would have found it, because it couldn't be anywhere else. But you—suppose you had been the *Portia*; how a man would have adored your witchery and contradictions and charming caprice, and while he guessed you hidden in the leaden casket, have feared to put his fate to the test—defeat would have been so tragic!" And Lord Charles leaned his folded arms on the head of my sphinx and brought his bold, black eyes closer to mine than was seemly.

"I am cold," I said; "we must go back to the house."

"Or is it that you now find my admiration too warm?" he asked. "Stay where you are and enjoy the moonlight, and I will fetch you a shawl. Don't be afraid; I shall not offend again." And he left me sitting alone in the stillness.

A few moments passed and I heard footsteps on the terrace below. Craning my neck over the tall hollyhocks, I beheld Lady Charles and Mompy advancing toward a carved stone seat placed romantically under a bower of honeysuckle. They were so close to me that I could have touched them

with my crutch had I been one of the masters of Belmont.

Evidently mine was not the only fancy busy with the "Merchant of Venice," for as they reached the bower Mompy raised his companion's hand to his lips and said, in a voice half-mocking, half-tender, "Sit, Jessica;" and Lady Charles clasped her beautiful hands and answered, "Yes, gladly, if you will say it all to me. Begin

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!"

I could not have broken the spell even to save myself from hearing the most pronounced love-making, for Mompy's voice thrilled my very soul, and I followed his perfect rendering of the lines to the end. Then I called from my perch: "You have another 'attentive spirit' besides Lady Charles. I, too, have been enjoying your spoken music."

To my surprise, Mompy answered gaily and in his usual manner.

"An eavesdropping wife! For shame, Mary! Come and make your apologies to Lady Charles."

This was all very well, but I was too deeply wounded with the events of the day to forgive so easily, and the return of Lord Charles with my shawl was a welcome diversion. We all sauntered back to the house together, but I allowed Lord Charles to do all the talking, and never turned my head to address my husband and his companion. When I entered the drawing-room they were nowhere to be seen. Perhaps I expected too much of Mompy, but certainly his pleasant manner had made me think an apology not unlikely, and it would have been an easy thing to bring Lady Charles back to the house and ask me to take a stroll with him in the moonlight.

Everyone was playing bridge, and though the clock pointed to eleven, I seemed the only creature who thought it was bedtime. Stealing quietly up stairs, I crossed my room, and, throwing open the shutters, gazed out on the night. One of the huge night

boats was passing the house, its quadruple decks brilliant with electric lights, while from some point forward of the pilot-house a searchlight was thrown, with startling effect, first upon one river bank and then upon the other. It was a boat going north. Several hours later its companions from Albany and Troy would pass down on their trip to New York.

Bodily fatigue had undoubtedly much to do with my feelings of wounded pride and desolation, but I surely had fair ground for the charge of unkindness that my heart made against Mompy. I turned on the light, examined the two doors leading to the rooms on either side of mine, and, finding I had the control of the bolts, I shot them into their sockets with a spiteful snap. My feelings must have been relieved, for I slept the moment my head touched the pillow.

Once I woke to hear someone moving noisily in the room north of mine. A key turned roughly in a lock and something heavy dropped on the floor. Mompy coming to bed, I thought, and with small consideration for the comfort of others.

It must have been two o'clock when I again awoke, with that start and fluttering of the heart which prove the senses have received a shock the sleepy brain has failed to register, and, lying there alert and listening, I heard the handle of the door opposite to Mompy's carefully turned. How I blessed that restraining bolt! The result must have been discouraging to the intruder, for everything became quiet, and I was just regaining a sense of security and calming my pulses to the rhythmic beat of the paddles of an approaching boat, when I heard a step on the piazza outside. All the conversation at dinner about river thieves, and how easy an access they would find to these very windows, rushed to my mind, and I forgot my personal terrors in the dread that my husband might hear the stealthy noise and risk his life by plunging at the burglar.

In a twinkling I was out of bed, and cautiously approaching the win-

dow, I peeped through the half-checked blinds. Sure enough, there was a man with his hand on the fastening of Mompy's window. I rushed to the door, softly slid back the bolt, groped my way to the bed, and throwing my arms round my husband's neck, I exclaimed: "My darling! do not move; promise me—" but at that moment the searchlight from the passing steamboat, falling full on the house, lit up the room with the brightness of day, and I beheld the nightcapped head of old Mr. Babbitt in my impassioned clasp, while at the same moment a pistol shot rang out sharply close outside the window. A voice cried: "Don't shoot again, sir, I am only Mr. Babbitt's new nurse;" and then Mompy's step hurrying along the piazza and the man's continued explanation: "He locked himself in, sir. I had took away his leg, but I forgot his crutch, and he must have been up with it as far as the door, and I was afraid he'd be all over the house unless I could pinch it, and I was trying to get in by the window, softly-like, so as not to frighten the lady, when you fired. Lucky you missed me, sir!"

The searchlight had lasted long enough to disclose my shrinking figure, and Mompy hastened to my side.

"What are you doing here, little girl?" he said, kindly. "Why, you are shaking with fright!" and all the time Mr. Babbitt, wildly excited, was shouting:

"Duck your head! Don't you hear him again firing at that mark? Give me my leg this minute, you fool!"—this to the nurse. "Do you think I'm going to lie here to be shot?"

"Come, Molly," said Mompy, leading me toward my room, "the whole household will be swarming in here in a moment to know what the pistol shot meant. Let us leave the nurse to make his own explanations." For the second time that night the bolt of the door shot into place, and Mompy and I stood face to face in the quiet of my room.

"I owe you an apology, my dearest," he said. "I have been all kinds of an ass, but the truth is, I mistook Lady Charles for her predecessor. You see, Fitz, when he was old enough to know better, married a yellow-haired fairy from the concert-hall stage and disappeared with her to the Mediterranean. I had a broken-hearted letter from the old Marchioness telling me all about it, and, indeed, all his family and his old friends were so disgusted with him that he was pretty generally ignored. Brayton and I, who had been at Oxford with him, always felt we might have saved him if we had been in England at the time. When he turned up here the other day I jumped to the conclusion that he was trying to float his wife socially on American waters, and while I determined to be as nice to her as I could, I was equally firm that she should not be received by you. You can judge of my disgust when I found all my carefully laid plans scattered to the winds by your unexpected arrival. It seems Brayton knew all the time that the concert-hall lady was dead and the Honorable Miss Vivian had consented to reign in her stead, but he never thought fit to mention it to me until after dinner this evening, when something I said as we walked out of the dining-room behind the others led to an explanation, and I have been mentally kicking myself ever since. You will forgive me, my darling, now that you understand? You must know how I hated to wound you, but somehow I couldn't explain, even for the sake of deprecating your anger. It seemed so mean to attack a woman's character, especially when that woman was the wife of my friend."

Mompy's arms were round me, and his voice very pleading. Tears were threateningly near, but surely I could get the better of them, so I only said:

"Oh, Mompy! you are like a Greek god in those pink pajamas!"

THE CHRISTMAS RIDERS

By Minna Irving

SHE opened the leaded lattice
And leaned from the frosty sill;
The Christmas bells were pealing,
And the night was white and still.
A full moon hung in the heavens
Its crest of silver flame,
And under the pines, snow-laden,
A sable rider came.

Black was the steed that bore him,
Black was his flaring plume,
And black the streaming mantle
That spread to the wind its gloom.
Trackless and smooth as marble
The road before him lay,
Printless and pure behind him
It wound to the chapel gray.

Again the bells of Christmas
Rang out in the quaint old town,
Again on the snowy highway
The ebon knight rode down.
Passing the leaded lattice
He waved his hat to her,
And she folded her virgin shoulders
In a cloak of soft white fur.

She mounted her milky palfrey—
The sand was low in the glass;
And the waits and the ringers saw them
In a powdery snow-cloud pass.
Away to the windy moorland,
Away to the frozen fen,
Where no man dared to follow,
They galloped from earthly ken.

Yellow from want of spinning
Was the flax she left on the wheel.
The hearts of father and mother
Were heavy and slow to heal.
Vainly they sought to find her;
But every pathway led
To a stone in a churchyard corner,
With a black yew overhead.

Hark! is it the angry norther
 That flies in the whirling snow,
 And clashes the icy branches,
 When ruddy the Yule-logs glow?
 Nay, 'tis the Christmas riders,
 Doomed to eternal flight
 (Invisible now to mortals),
 Who pass in the wintry night!



ON THE STAIRS

“IT’S so good of you, Miss Idolmine, to consent to sit out this— Certainly, I’ll let you pass, Jones. Don’t mention it.

“As I was going to say, Miss Idolmine, I’ve been trying to find a chance to see you alone, oh, for several centuries, it seems to me, because I have something very particular to tell— Oh, you want to get down? Certainly, Jones. Can’t you find her?

“And it is awfully good of you, Miss Idolmine, to miss this dance just for me, and I do appreciate it, and I hope it augurs— See here, Jones, are you getting paid for running up and down these stairs?

“Oh, Miss Idolmine, is it really only because you are too tired to dance this time? Isn’t there any other reason, just the tiniest little bit of—? Yes, confound you! I suppose you do have to get down again, Jones.

“What I’ve been longing to say, Miss Idolmine—Mabel—is that I love— Say, Jones, I’ll kill you if—! Well, there, get on up if you have to, and stay up, darn it!

“No, Miss Idolmine—Mabel—I must say all now; I cannot stop. You must know how I love you, and when you consented to sit out this dance with me I knew I could no longer live in this agony of doubt, but must learn from your own sweet lips— Slide down the banisters if you’ve got to get down, Jones, you blasted idiot!

“Mabel, oh, Mabel, my love, my darling—no, I won’t hush! Look up, sweetheart, and let me read in those glorious orbs the sweetest, holiest confession ever— Jones, if ever I get a chance I’ll butcher you! You don’t want to go up? What do you want, then? Mabel—Miss Idolmine? Why, what?—engaged? *You?* I—I—oh, blast it! somebody keep me from biting holes in the carpet. But I—er—I congratulate you, both of you, of course.”

ALEX. RICKETTS.



WORTHY PERSEVERANCE

SHE—Miss Plainleigh says she has discovered a new use for mistletoe.
 HE—Well, it’s about time. It wouldn’t work for her the old way.

A LATIN SOLUTION

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

I HAD always been dying to ask Leonora about that Florentine episode, which had created a good deal of talk and some unkind criticism. As we sat together in her boudoir, in Paris, on that gloomy November evening, I took courage.

Her women friends said that she had never been known to allude to it; that when the unfortunate Italian shot himself, she picked up her bric-à-brac, packed her boxes, closed her villa and returned to America in the first Genoese steamer. Very brilliant women are usually suspected of hardness; and certainly, on this occasion, Leonora showed no very long regret or, if she had been cruel, any convincing contrition. Yet they had been inseparable, Mrs. Lantry and her adorer. Their names had been linked together an entire Winter and Spring, under drawing-room portières and in club corridors. Florence is but a small town, a hotbed of empty cackle, and from the Tornabuoni to the Cascine no love affair is ever scented without creating a ripple of foolish curiosity and conversation. Why, if they liked each other, there should have been any tragedy involved, remained a mystery, since both were rich, unencumbered and free.

I watched her now, her head against the pale tapestries, her eyes turned to the ceiling, her stately figure tightly caught in its *foureau* of black satin, on which gleamed strange, jeweled embroideries full of sombre lights. I looked at her splendid arms and hands, her moist lips, her dreamy eyes, and did not wonder at the wild love she had inspired. But blood is not spilled for us every day, and its

fleck leaves a doubt of treachery, a wish for some summary form of retributive justice. If she had lured the poor devil to his doom through pure idleness and folly—she who turned everybody's head but her own—I, for one, should feel angry with her. She sometimes feigns to care about my opinion.

We had sent away the coffee and liqueurs, and she was playing with her cigarette while I was smoking my cigar. She was rather silent and very sweet. This element of sweetness only her *intimes* know. Her savage pride conceals it from the profane for reasons never divulged, and understood only by herself.

We dismissed the Cuban question, the latest Dreyfus development, and the colorless *on dits* of the American colony.

"How long—er—did you live in Italy?" I asked rising, as I spoke, to warm my coat-tails against the low mantel, deciding that the propitious moment for attack had come.

"Why?"

Mrs. Lantry rarely answered to expectations, but this was at least a challenge.

"Why? Why, because it is interesting."

"What is interesting?"

"You, and Italy."

"Ah!"

There was a pause. Then, suddenly:

"What did you hear about me there?"

"I heard about you there what all might hear, that you made victims, and that one——"

"Killed himself?"

"Yes."

"The Coreans are the only logical people. There the man is hung for his wife's crimes, since she is outside the law and irresponsible. Do you believe that there is blood on my conscience, and that I ought to suffer?"

She spoke low and with some agitation.

"I don't know anything about the Coreans; they are doubtless gallant. I do know that I have heard you blamed, and have wished that I knew the truth."

"You shall. There was no crime, only an—ineptitude."

"The word is a bold one for such a case; it strikes me as inadequate and somewhat harsh."

"I was never harsh to him."

"Yet you were the woman he loved, and for whom——"

"Stop there!" she cried. "It was not for me he killed himself!" The plot was dark, it seemed. It enveloped us in its ample folds of gloom.

"You are one of the men whose esteem women prize," she said, "they don't know why. I never could speak of that Florence time; but if you will listen now I will tell you all." She clasped her hands across her knees and sighed.

"He was one of those interesting-looking individuals one meets sometimes in the street, in churches, at the theatres, in railway carriages, and so rarely in people's houses."

I laughed. "The hackneyed type—*le beau ténébreux*."

"Not in the least. He did not look like a poet. He was blue-eyed, not intellectual, a capital shot. That was what he did best—shoot birds, so—" She raised an imaginary rifle to her chin and made the movement of the *tire* with vigorous grace.

"He brought them down! *chè!* He was reputed a brave fellow, had been one of the *guardia nobile*, rode well and waltzed better."

"And he met you."

"And he met me, and in a house, at a dinner at the Contessa Guadagna's."

"I know her."

"I had been a year in Rome and its environs, and then had taken the *villino* on the Viale del Colli in Florence for another Winter. I went to dinner with Alberto, the Count, the host, but he, Floria, the Marchese Floria, sat on the other side. Guadagna is rather deaf, and his English is—*anxious*, and it was in a good laugh our friendship—Floria's and mine—began. He asked me how I liked old Lord Dunreah, who sat opposite. I replied: 'I think him a mild bore.' 'A wild boar, ha, ha! How clever you are, dear Mrs. Lantry!'—and with that guffaws of bouffe laughter from Alberto. Floria and I looked at each other, and were attacked on our side by the *fou rire*. Well, after that dinner we became great pals; possibly this is not the right word. Companionship between the sexes does not exist in Italy. A woman's reputation would suffer in the long philandering that our civilization accepts as innocent. It is difficult to Italians—they are vainer and hotter.

"It was odd—he seemed powerfully attracted toward me, and yet to resist my influence. He paid me the strangest court. There were visits in which he poured out his maddest love, followed by several days of absolute silence, when I supposed him dead or indifferent. Then a rush at me in a ballroom, in the street, with insistence on an immediate tryst, whispered *en passant*, with eyes alert for passers-by and their possible surmises. It was all so absurd I found it amusing. Well—" her voice was a trifle husky—"sometimes I allowed him to come to see me, and sometimes I didn't, and the more severe I was the more engrossed he became. I had heard about him. I had been told he was an inconsolable widower. I confess when I first met him he appeared to be passably happy. His temper was gay, joyous. He chatted lightly—like all Italians. There is no depth to their talk—they know all about poets except their poems, priests except their tenets,

physicians except their science. After his first avowals to me he became moody, and I concluded his mind was gay and his soul melancholy. I questioned him. I touched one day a locket he wore on his watch chain. I noticed that he winced. Woman-like, I pressed him. He then, with trembling lips, told me it contained a flower his young wife held in her hand when she died, and which had been blessed. I listened with respect. I was a little—bored, but I am delicate enough to appreciate sentiment. From this moment her name came back frequently between us. I found that I knocked up here against a wall of unhealthy brooding, which seemed to separate us. On his part, he questioned me eagerly about my own past, but except that I had been left a widow in early youth, my native reserve kept me mute. The Italian is curious as to detail. He asks one a great many questions. It is a form of flattery, not without savor.

"Of course, he didn't suit me. He had little reticence. I felt convinced that he allowed people to gossip about me to him; that he talked of me to the United States Consul—who happened to be a gentleman that year—asked him about me; where I was going, what I was doing. The club was opposite the Consulate, and he used to stop the man in the Tornabuoni and chatter of me—think of it! Do you believe, when I charged him with it, angrily, instead of denying it—as would have been decent—his eyes grew sunken, he threw out his arms. 'I am in misery—misery!' he cried. 'Must I not, then, who live always alone, speak of you to someone?' I opened my mouth to reply that an American would feel no such necessity, that it was the most shocking, horrible form. But I said nothing. They are such children! They have a sweetness. The years do not make them old. He was several years older than I, and yet near him I felt like a world-worn philosopher."

"So," I said, with a grimace, "that sort of weakness actually endears men to women!"

"Yes, to some women. To a hard, cold thing like me." She paused. I had stretched myself in a low chair beside her. A silence fell. After a while she began again.

"With all his curious passion for me there seemed moments when he hated me, because I had disturbed his intentions of fidelity. I often think that between every man and woman is a principle of distrust and hatred. Love puts it to sleep. That is why we are not cherished by the lovers we rudely awaken with unwelcome enlightenment. They like their sleep. Don't smile, my dear, at what I am going to tell you. A curious refinement or perversity—which is it?—makes men averse to say to each other what they would freely admit to a woman. Luigi told me he had always been faithful to his wife, whom he loved with great tenderness, during the years of their married life, and that for the seven years since her death he had never so much as pressed a woman's hand; that he had earnestly desired to become a priest, but his family had dissuaded him. He pledged me to secrecy about this cult of memory, and I promised, half-amused, half-admiring. Well, he looked upon me as the temptress who was luring him from his self-imposed monasticism! He struggled against me, fought his overmastering fancy; and finally, of course, being human, succumbed. We were engaged. He gave himself up, laid his *palazzi*, fiefs and fortune at my feet; and, I am ashamed to acknowledge—yes, actually—I liked the creature."

"Why ashamed?"

"Because, was there ever such a wooing, and of such a woman as I am?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Perhaps it offered piquancy. It was new, picturesque—and then there was the victory."

"Victory? Wait. We were engaged. The fact was never announced, and to this day the Florentines think I trifled with Floria. To be sure, two women who wanted him insisted he

had killed himself to get rid of me. You see they couldn't say—" she laughed—"that he was after my income, or he would have lived to get it! The general verdict was that I drove him to his death. Perhaps I did, but God knows I am innocent!"

The clock struck eleven. The fire spurted out a few dying sparks and fell away to ashes. She got up. She looked at herself a moment in the mirror, passing her hands over her hair.

"Where was I?"

"You were engaged."

"Yes. He seemed to love me very much. He was one of the rare lovers who, when another woman asks him to go to see her, doesn't. He wanted to be near me, devoted every minute. Yet sometimes he would say, 'My God! My God! If I had known I could forget!' This irritated me; I was alone; I was dull; I was homesick. I needed cheering—a *man* to lean upon, to uphold me, not a puling child to cajole and console. I told him so. 'You splendid woman!' he cried, 'you are right. No human being whose soul keeps one remorse or one regret is a fit mate for you.' I pointed to the locket he still wore and asked him to take it off. I told him that it hurt me. 'You are not a priest-ridden woman,' I said, contemptuously, 'or a mediæval peasant wallowing in superstition. If you made a vow to her upon her death-bed it cannot be binding. How many of us keep our vows?' When I said this to him he turned upon me like a wolf. 'It will never leave me,' he said, with white lips; 'it holds the flower!' 'Very well,' I answered, quietly, 'you are free,' and I slipped from my finger the ring he had placed there. He fell at my feet and clasped my knees, with unspeakable love in

his eyes. 'Have mercy, have mercy on me!' he cried. I disengaged myself from his embrace. 'You can choose between us two,' I said, coldly, and not without disgust. 'Is it your dead wife, or your living love?' He left me without one word. He shot himself that evening through the heart."

"And you?"

"Such unreason baffles us Anglo-Saxons. It was really *too* unintelligible. My feeling has always been one of resentment. I actually had believed that he cared for me."

"I dare say he did."

All our lives we blunder in our judgments of the people we know best. Great bitterness lies beneath these misconceptions.

"And was that all?"

She tried to smile, but the effort must have cost her something. A tear shone on her eyelash. She dashed it furtively and impatiently away with her handkerchief. "You see, I liked him," she said.

And somehow I felt a little ashamed of my rôle of Grand Inquisitor.

As I sauntered down the Avenue de Kléber toward the Champs Élysées a savage grudge stirred within me against this Italian—that mysterious antagonism of race, old as life. The woman was clever—he was stupid—yet somehow he had got the better of her. In some spiritual sense he had distanced us all. In the first place, we were alive and he was dead. To be dead seemed to me that night to be an advantage. Death is always dignified. Perhaps my dinner had disagreed with me. I told myself it was no mean matter to live in the imagination of such a woman. He would be forever remembered when all the rest of us were forgotten.



RESTAURANT PHILOSOPHY

EVERYTHING comes to him who waits—even the waiter.

THE MASTER ARTIST

By Robertson Forbes

“OH, well,” said Purcell, in his placid tones, “I suppose if we hadn’t other people to get tired of we should get tired of ourselves.”

This was apropos of the departure from the club of society’s latest pet genius, whose popularity was on the wane. As the genius left the smoking-room he remarked that he was going home to bed, though it was only one o’clock—which shows to what limits some people will go to be original. Purcell’s remark was in reply to the unexpressed feeling of the group of young men who were lounging off the effects of the arduous supper that had followed a little theatre party.

“What wearies me,” exclaimed Bertie Thomas, whose father had made his money digging up the streets by contract, “is the way these fellows who are thought to be geniuses impose on the women. Of course, they are all fearfully clever, and all that, but in the end half of them turn out to be wine agents or something of the sort.”

“But, after all,” commented Purcell, “these geniuses that the ladies are always asking us to admire are safer for you to associate with, Bertie, than the real article.”

“Tut! there are no real geniuses nowadays. The fellows that claim to be are bores, and they do nothing that isn’t stupid.”

“Perhaps you are right, but the last time I was in Paris I met one that gave me the only couple of minutes of excitement I have felt in years; and he may give the world some of the same before he is done.”

“Oh, come now! Purcell excited!”

There was a murmur of amused disbelief from the group, of which Purcell was evidently the idol. He smiled his most amiable and puzzling smile in response to the sally. It was clear to anyone of discernment that this interesting stripling was not a native American. He was impossibly young, as they say of the decadent French poets, and wickedly witty. In point of truth, he was an unusually well-provided remittance man, who made the most of his supplies by affecting a certain amount of bohemianism—which is the only fashionable way of being poor. He had the absinthe eye. Just why he lived in America was something of a mystery, but there are numerous men in New York who are liberally supported for doing nothing more than keeping an ocean between themselves and the persons who might be considered responsible for them. Since his arrival he had more than once set the fashion in ties, and he was the recognized authority on all kinds of deleterious drinks. So, to hear of this unemotional egotist being excited was incredible to his familiars. There was certainly need of an explanation.

“I know the only artistic way to tell a story is not to tell it,” Purcell began; “but as this is perhaps only the beginning of a story, I may as well let you have it.”

This characteristic beginning won him the instant attention of his companions.

“I first met Mercier at Oxford, where he was taking a course in English drama. He studied hard—

harder than any man I ever knew—but he was never a plug. He used to say that a man could get a liberal education in a week if he really knew what he was after, and Mercier always seemed to know. The professors might have taken a course under him before he left, and that despite the fact that English literature seems so crude to a Frenchman. But what I intended to say was that, although he studied, he always had time for a lark, and was one of the jolliest of the jolly set. He got into a number of scrapes while there that might have caused him trouble, but he was through with the University before the dons had a chance to take up his case.

“We all knew that he intended to do something in the dramatic line some day, but as long as he was a good fellow nobody cared. I remembered afterward that he once told me that no man has ever thought deeply who has not occasionally been insane. But a fellow hears lots of things like that in college. When I met him in Paris he seemed to be looking for a friend to talk to, and he naturally made me the victim. He is such a fine egotist it is a delight to listen to him. He dragged me away to a little café, where he could have me all alone to rave at. He had written his first play—a tragedy—and had found just the actress to interpret it. And to make matters still better, he was heels over head in love with her. Well, the upshot of our little dinner was that I agreed to share his box on the opening night.

“We reached the theatre just before the curtain rose, and I remarked that he was a trifle nervous. When I spoke of it he laughed and replied: ‘Yes, I am a trifle nervous, but not for the reason that you probably suppose.’

“It seemed to me there couldn’t possibly be two reasons in the case. If I were just about to witness the first public performance of my first tragedy I should be nervous, and should know just why.

“‘Oh, I am not nervous on ac-

count of my play,’ he explained; ‘I am afraid that Mercedes will not realize the entire possibilities of her rôle.’

“That was pretty strong, but I might have expected it. His egotism is so perfect that it is constantly flashing from a new facet. Still, I couldn’t help asking him if it was possible that he had no fear lest his play should be unexpectedly lacking in some part. He swung right round and looked me squarely in the eye.

“‘You evidently think me very egotistical,’ he remarked, ‘but what you mistake for egotism is in reality the perfection of humility. I know I have nothing to fear for my play, because it is based on the eternal principles that underlie all art and all life. In mixing the ingredients I found ready to my hand I did no more than the bartender that mixes the cocktail. Of course, he deserves some credit for his skill, but neither the materials nor the recipe for mixing them originated with him. The simile is not perfect, but it should convey to you some idea of my attitude toward my work. With Mercedes, however, the case is entirely different, as you may, perhaps, see before the evening is over.’

“Mercier had always been a study to me, because he never bored me. We used to say of him at Oxford that besides being a great linguist he could, when he wished, be silent in every language that ever was spoken. I never could understand him in our college days, and I am not sure that I understand him yet, though I had an ideal chance to study him that night.

“Then, if at any time, his emotions might be expected to slip from his control and reveal somewhat of his true character; but as he sat watching his play unfolding itself, his pale face had a tranquillity that hardly seemed natural. His cold gray eyes never wavered, and only an occasional quivering of his nostrils showed that his interest was in any way aroused. His face is one that would not attract particular attention, but

when once studied can never be forgotten. It is the face at once of a man of genius and of a man of the world. Under its mask of good-fellowship and self-control one can see the lines of scholarly asceticism. I already knew of him that, while he could give himself up to the joy of life when it so pleased him, he could on occasion crucify the flesh with the calm severity of a demi-god. While his frame is forceful and athletic, a certain fineness about it certifies good breeding."

This description, particularly the last half-sentence, made several of Purcell's auditors wriggle perceptibly, and Bertie sat up and tried to take a sip of champagne with an air of fine carelessness. Purcell smiled faintly and proceeded with his story.

"But after the entrance of Mercedes—it was the first time I had seen her, though he had raved of her and led me to expect something wonderful—my attention was divided between her and Mercier. She has never been to America, but she may come some day if she doesn't make too great a success where she is. And if she does come you will say that you never before knew the possibilities of a woman—for beauty and art. While she is capable of the most absolute emotion, her usual condition is one of repose—the repose of a tigress. Graceful, wonderfully gowned, bewitching in every way, I understood how she had conquered Mercier, even without considering the fact that she was the exact artiste he needed to interpret the rôle for which she was cast. But her entrance did not change a line of his face as he watched the development of his play. He explained to me after the first act that he did not observe the details except where they obtruded themselves, for he wished to get at his play in its totality. Even though he loved Mercedes, when she became a factor in his art she lost all individuality, so far as he was concerned. She was simply a detail of his masterpiece.

"When he began to talk like that I had a feeling that there was something dangerous in the air, and—well,

I tried to draw him out. His play is really a wonderful piece of work, and will no doubt be seen in this country when anyone can be found with enough skill to translate and adapt it. The part taken by Mercedes is that of a young girl, happy, irresponsible and thoughtless. Being deceived and wronged, her jealousy is aroused, and she devotes herself to revenge. To this end she mixes in political conspiracies in which her lover is interested, and in order to ruin him sets forces in motion that get beyond her power. Finally she discovers, when it is too late, that she was mistaken in her suspicions, and her despair is indescribable. But I am anticipating.

"When I was chatting with Mercier at the end of the first act I complimented him on the wonderful skill with which he had aroused the interest of the audience, and expressed a doubt that he could make it hold to the end. He simply smiled at me and said: 'Wait till the fifth act.'

"Each succeeding act intensified the interest, and I was really becoming enthusiastic. I couldn't conceal my feelings, and I said to Mercier that he evidently had a perfect right to his egotism, or humility, whichever he called it. 'You have shown yourself a master of your art,' I said, 'and the drama is certainly the highest form of human expression.'

"'Yes,' he replied; 'the dramatic is the only great art. In its poetic form it embraces the rhythm of music, the colors of painting, the forms of sculpture and everything that can appeal to the cultivated taste, except absolute creation. But just think what it would be if an author, instead of embodying his ideal characters in words and stage directions, could put them forth to play their parts in flesh and blood, real living and breathing beings with immortal souls!'

"I admitted that that would be a very high form of art.

"'Yes,' he continued, 'God was the master artist. But do you know, I often wonder if some of the great dramatic characters of the past have

not by this time become real, and if their souls have not gone to their account like those of people who have lived in flesh and blood. It is, perhaps, not so impossible as you suppose,' he added, noticing my incredulous smile. 'It has been shown by hypnotists that a subject can be made to follow absolutely the suggestions made to him in the hypnotic state and in that way have his whole nature changed, so that he is not what he was originally, but what the hypnotist has made him.'

"And what of that?" I asked.

"Just this: Is it not possible that a great actor or actress might become self-hypnotized by the intensity of the part, so that the natural personality would be entirely displaced by that of the character portrayed? Indeed, that phenomenon really occurs every time a great artist plays a part and fully realizes its possibilities. When Dusé or Bernhardt is at her best she is not herself but the actual character she is portraying, and I firmly believe that if she should die at the supreme moment she would pass into the next world, not as herself, but as *Tosca* or *Fedora*.'

"The way he argued this to me was so convincing that I couldn't see any of its absurdities, and just then the curtain rose on the last act. Mercedes was magnificent. I felt that I was seeing a great actress in her hour of triumph, and that the world was to have another supreme artist with the added charm of youth and beauty. I was so absorbed in watching her that I forgot about Mercier, who had stepped to the back of the box; but just at the point where the tragedy culminated I heard him murmur, or rather hiss, desperately: 'She has failed!' I turned about, and an instant later caught him by the

wrist, for he had a revolver in his hand and was looking at Mercedes like a madman.

"Good God!" I whispered, 'you surely wouldn't try to kill the woman you love because you think she has failed?'

"He mastered himself instantly. 'No,' he said, 'but I should have killed her had she succeeded. Then her soul would have been the soul of the character I created, and I should have been the first master artist of the world. But I expected too much. She has failed and I have failed. But now you must come to supper with Mercedes and me. She has really done wonderfully, taking all things into consideration, and I have hopes that she will do still better.'"

"And did you really have supper with them?" Bertie asked.

"Why, certainly. And Mercedes proved even more interesting in private than in public, and I congratulated Mercier from the bottom of my heart. He has her love, if he has not achieved all he wished in art, and he still has the future before him. I hear he is writing another play for her, one that is really a study of her own character, and that he intends it to fit her to the life."

"Or death," said one of the listeners. "Did you warn her of his insane ambition?"

"Why should I?" asked Purcell, sipping his absinthe. "They are happy, and he may never succeed in doing what he wants to do; and even if he did, I am not sure that I should have any right to interfere with anything so artistic. If he does succeed, why, think of the sensation—when one really understands."

Bertie shuddered and thanked heaven for the tame geniuses he had been in the habit of meeting.



THOSE DEAR GIRLS

MISS AUTUMN—I never buy anything that can be of no use to me.
MISS CAUSTIQUE—Why did you buy mistletoe?

THE GIRL WITH THE VIOLETS

By Lee Henry

WE lived in the same apartment house, with the elevator for the scene of our ascending and descending contemplation. I could always tell when she was near. A sweet, subtle perfume was her herald. When I looked up, a sight of the girl with the violets recompensed my eyes.

She lived with her parents. They were elderly, conventional types, with halos of aristocratic respectability. Their daughter belonged to the Burne-Jones race of women—tall and erectly slender, yet conveying the impression of graceful strength. Her gowns were modish but severely simple, and were always black. Her aureole of hair, with the warmth of an Autumn sunset, and her perennial bunch of violets, supplied the necessary artistic color-touch.

After seeing her thus many weeks, I began to take an inordinate interest—in the violets. Who daily burned this depleting incense, I wondered? Belles I knew who boasted weekly violets; men I suspected whose florist's bills coincided with the same. I numbered no young women among my acquaintances, however, whose voracity for violets demanded daily quenching. To accept them, I argued, was a sign of compromise; they were the insignia of the engaged.

This theory I was soon obliged to reject unless willing to admit polyandric interests. I saw the girl on different occasions about the city, and always with a different man. The first time it was in the grand stand at a football game. She was with a young Adonis all physique, good clothes and little brain, I fancied,

who shouted like an Indian for Yale. Immediately the source of the violets was located; they emanated from the lusty follower of the blue.

In a week this theory was demolished. I arrived home one afternoon in time to see her descend from a private automobile and make her smiling adieus to its owner—an elderly Beau Brummel, fit companion for her father. Here was the more logical origin of the flowers; the proverbial elderly dotard, with more dollars than discretion to his credit, was still on the tapis.

A few days later she was at the Herter water-color exhibit with a rising young illustrator for companion. He was debarred from the contest owing to the well-known stringency of the artistic money market. Be it said to the girl's credit, however, she was as gracious to the young artist as she had been to the elderly dotard. I was glad that the dross of things that glitter had not eaten into her soul. That day, as I watched her, I became convinced that she had a soul, aspiring, yes, and unsatisfied. She might have a sweetheart, but as yet she herself was not one—a distinction that marks the Sahara between ideal and commonplace love.

My interest from this time was absorbing. It was ridiculous, but the question of who sent the violets became the burning issue with me. In business a bunch of blue blossoms blurred the ledger. At home my curiosity increased rather than lessened. My peace of mind demanded that the problem be solved. To solve it I must meet my enigma. Her father was the unsuspecting medium

through which an invitation to their apartments was obtained.

She was even more attractive, in her clinging white house gowns, than she had been in the tailor's plainer lines. But the disturbing violets were still pinned to her frock. Was she never without them? After several calls their presence became strangely irritating. Soon they were a Frankenstein to me. Though I had not created them, I resolved to obliterate them. To supplant them became my highest purpose in life.

I opened the campaign by storming her with American beauties. An appreciative note was my only reward. When I called the roses were enthroned in a Favrile glass. Not one graced my lady's gown.

The next volley was a shower of chrysanthemums. These found a home in some Egyptian pottery on the floor. Carnations, lilies-of-the-valley, hyacinths, heliotropes, flowers in season and out, all were tried with like results. The violets still held the citadel, riveted by unseen bonds. Hypocrites for ages, they were now showing their true natures. Unshrinking, immodest, the antithesis of all characteristics with which poets have endowed them, they flaunted their favoritism in my face. Irritation now developed into exasperation. I hated them with a hatred that augmented with their every victory and intensified with my every defeat. When by laughing speech or innuendo I referred to her "purple constancy," the girl was embarrassed and evasive in her reply.

At last I stumbled on what was assuredly the real clue. The name of Norton Sedley, a lieutenant in the — Infantry, then in the Philippines, ranked with the Lares and Penates in the girl's home. Not only she, but her parents, sang the soldier's praises and voiced their anxiety for his safety during the war.

One afternoon, in my presence, the maid brought the girl a foreign letter. With unconcealed eagerness she took it, exclaiming, "It should have arrived two days ago!"

She made no secret of the fact that it was from the Philippines. The unconscious exclamation told me the rest. The letter was evidently one of many regularly expected. Sanctioned by her parents, I felt sure she had a secret engagement or understanding with this man. By his order the violets were sent, a sweet reminder of her brave hero who was afar shooting heathen black men. My face must have photographed my suspicions, for she blushed deeply and laid the letter aside.

When I reached my apartment I sat down in front of the fire, nerved to read my own heart. It requires courage when a man knows the character of what he will find. At twenty there is no such thing as love that is hopeless. At thirty, unrequited passion rings a death knell. I did not deceive myself. I knew that I had gradually given the girl the whole of my mature adoration. I knew, also, that in honor I must see her no more.

The next day I left town for a brief holiday in the open. Like all sufferers, I longed for nature. My sympathizers must be the quiet fields and serene stars.

As I was riding on the old Post Road one afternoon, courting physical weariness as an antidote to a persistent insomnia, I came upon a bicycle accident. A man and a little girl riding in opposite directions had collided, and the girl's machine was badly wrecked. The man was rough and, seeing my intent, claimed pressing business as excuse for hurried departure. I dismounted to examine the broken wheel.

"My child," I remarked, after sufficient examination, "your steed has a bad concussion. Nothing but a visit to the hospital will restore it to health."

She laughed appreciatively, and said that, fortunately, an infirmary was near. Then I saw that she was not a child, but a diminutive young woman. The discovery would have embarrassed me, but her frank, charming manner put me at my ease. I slipped my horse's bridle through

my arm and walked with her down the road.

"Child, indeed!" she exclaimed, standing, like most small people, very erect, as if reaching for the inches nature had denied her; "why, I'm a new woman. I'm the proprietor and manager of an industry, and declaring dividends, too!"

"You!" I smiled, incredulously, wondering in what profession four feet five of femininity might be successfully engaged.

"It is patent, sir," she answered, with mock dignity, "that your memory should be refreshed and impressed. May I call your attention to the historical facts that the Greek whose pen made Philip of Macedon uneasy; the Frenchman whose sword changed the map of Europe, and the Egyptian whose wives made pulp of the hearts of two world-famous generals were all what is commonly called undersized?"

Here was a whimsical spirit, and I encouraged her to continue.

"Tall people," she went on, "are apt to be simpletons. What they gain in length seems to be at the expense of brains."

I tried to shrink my five feet eleven lower in my riding boots.

"Know, sir," she went on, "that I am an honored alumnus of Vassar. In fact, you behold a B. A., class '96."

"And in what business may the B. A. be successfully engaged?" I inquired, helping her push her wheel.

"Not a quarter of a mile from here is my plant—or, rather, my plants," she answered. "The Levite to whom you have played the part of good Samaritan raises violets for the market of New York."

Violets! I stiffened as if in the electrician's chair. Then I put a question to her, like the criminal who fondles his own noose.

"If you saw a young woman who daily appeared with a large bunch of violets, what conclusions would you draw?"

She eyed me from the corner of a shrewdly bright eye, but I masked my face against her glance.

"That she had a very devoted admirer who could sign his cheque for five figures at least."

"Not necessarily engaged to him?" I asked, carelessly, swinging my crop.

"Yes, engaged, or in that preliminary state known as besieged. We have many such orders from brainless nabobs—all over six feet," she laughed.

I accompanied her as far as her hot-houses, and wishing to know her name, asked if she would not favor me with a business card. Her eye twinkled as she emerged from her tiny office and demurely presented me with the card. "Honor Bright," I read, "Horticulturist. Sleepytown-on-the-Hudson," engraved in elegant block letters.

"Rather unlike the usual 'weddings and funerals a specialty' style, isn't it?" she asked. "The name is not a joke, though everyone thinks so. I used to dislike my name, but it's worth money to me now in the advertising line. My father, who was something of a wag, insisted upon burdening me with it. Now don't say that you promise to order flowers from me—*honor bright*. The bad puns are the worst punishment the name inflicts."

I laughingly bade her good-bye and mounted my horse, decidedly cheered by contact with her refreshing personality. Verily, the world has too few of such spirits who "successfully demonstrate the theorem of the extreme livableness of life."

I went home strengthened, determined to make one more effort to supplant the violets. If unsuccessful, I would ask the girl frankly if I was right in assuming that she was secretly betrothed.

I found a note from her mother asking me to dinner Christmas Day. My *pièce de résistance* was at once prepared.

On Christmas morning the van of a florist noted for highway robbery drove up to the apartment house we called "home." From the rear the driver brought a huge basket swathed

lovingly in cotton batting to protect it from the seasonable cold. No mystery to me, looking from behind the security of French curtains, was this white emblem. Underneath, in the basket's gilt embrace, were cream roses. Was I to blame if the florist called them "bridal?" Offsetting their pallor were delicate mauve orchids, while ribbon of a like color was intertwined in a stately bow.

In spite of my efforts at self-control I went to the dinner with riotous expectations. It is almost impossible to abstain in fancy from painting pictures as one wishes to see them. All day I had pictured the girl in imagination, a rose—my rose—tucked in her hair, another worn carelessly in her belt. Only the rigor of conventionalities kept me from an outbreak when she greeted me—a white dream-girl, with a knot of violets in her pale hair.

We sat down to a table beautiful with slim vases of chrysanthemums and brilliant with old silver and glass. My basket reposed sorrowfully in the drawing-room. The roses had nodded sympathetically to me. The orchids had assumed a stately human expression, which said plainly, "We begged her to wear us, but she preferred those insignificant little flowers." Without even their presence at the table to comfort me, I paid the world's heart-ache tax of enforced gaiety. But my brilliance was of the glacial period. One who touched me must have chipped off ice.

I devoted myself to her father, who liked me, and before whom it was, consequently, easy to appear at my best. All the guests were buoyed by that gladsome Christmas exhilaration that rises so universally. I alone staggered under my cross.

After dinner a voice detained me in a small Turkish ante-room. The girl wished to thank me for the flowers. The basket was the most beautiful, she said, she had ever seen.

"Don't thank me," I said, trying to swallow the bitterness. "I have been indulging in a mimic War of the Roses."

"What do you mean?" she asked, fingering the pearls that hung from her neck.

"I took a vow," I said, with a forced laugh, "to supplant those favored violets. I would not believe they had taken root in your heart. Tonight I acknowledge defeat."

"But I could not wear your brilliant flowers when we were in mourning," she explained.

"And the royal purple of violets," I asked, "successfully symbolizes grief?"

She rose to leave me. Sarcasm was a weapon with which she would not engage.

"Don't go," I whispered, drinking in her white sweetness. "Can't you read the truth? Those violets are a tormenting token of someone near and dear to you."

The temporary displeasure was followed by a look of mischief.

"They are from someone who is near and dear to me," she said, smiling; "someone who is brave and strong."

My heart hardened to see that she could deal me the blow so lightly.

"Is he six feet two?" I asked, affecting her tone, and remembering her admiration for length of brawn.

"No—o," she replied, slowly; "he's four feet five, I think."

I looked at her blankly.

"He works very hard to support his mother," she continued. "He graduated from Vassar in '96."

Then a ray of intelligence shot through me. "He raises violets up the Hudson!" I breathlessly asserted.

"How did you know?" she asked, in astonishment.

"He calls his hothouses his 'modern nursery,'" I continued. "Will you tell me his name if I guess it—Honor Bright?"

She laughed so heartily that I knew I had found the solution.

"We were classmates at college," she explained. "To help her, father orders violets sent twice a week."

Before I could detain her she melted from me with a perversity fascinating as it was provoking. Still,

when I went home, in all the land there was no happier Christmas heart.

I learned later that this same perversity had vetoed her wearing my flowers. She had penetrated the spirit of bravado that first prompted them and wishing to out-play me, had devoted herself more assiduously to the violets. With her it had been pure mischief. With me it had become serious as death.

We did not have violets at our wedding. My antipathy was too strong to be overcome. Even now I cannot escape their influence. Whenever I

am prone to indulge in a natural propensity for jumping at conclusions, my lady smilingly shakes a warning finger at me and says, "Sweet violets!" Yet such is her wondrous magic that on Sundays and holidays she is still The Girl With the Violets. Her husband's card accompanies the flowers. But he denies all affiliation with them, as a line is drawn through his name and "Anonymous" is written instead.

Honor Bright alone might lift the mystery. But this, for her name's sake, she has promised never to do!



TWELFTH NIGHT SONG

HEAPED be the fagots high,
 And the half-burnèd bough
 From last year's revelry
 Be litten now!
 Brimmed be the posset bowl
 For every lusty soul;
 And while the maskers rule,
 Cry "Noël!" cry "Noël!" down all the halls of Yule!

O eager viols, thrill!
 Pipe, hautboys, clear and sweet!
 Work your impetuous will,
 Ye restless feet!
 For every lip—a glass!
 For every lad—a lass!
 And, ere the ardors cool,
 Cry "Noël!" cry "Noël!" down all the halls of Yule!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



HELPING THINGS ALONG

MRS. CRABSHAW—What's that you're blowing on your bugle, dear?
 BOBBIE—The call to arms, ma. Sister's young man has her under the mistletoe.



THE TEST OF TESTS

JAGGLES—What makes you think he is henpecked?
 WAGGLES—He goes with his wife when she does her Christmas shopping.)

A CHRISTMAS GREETING

THE leaves of the tall trees flutter,
 A warm breeze blows from the bay;
 O Sweetheart, fling open your shutter
 To the morning of Christmas Day!
 The birds in the orchard singing,
 The roses shining with dew,
 The sun and the breeze are bringing
 The greeting of Christmas to you!

A row on the winding river,
 A picnic under the trees
 Where the sunbeams play and quiver
 On the leaves that stir in the breeze;
 A hammock-doze in the arbor
 When the sun grows hot at noon;
 And a sail at night in the harbor
 By the light of a Christmas moon.

Oh, turn from your sweet December,
 Whose ardor brings you the rose,
 For a moment while you remember
 The land of the Christmas snows,
 And the lover who sends devotion—
 Subdued by the sense of loss—
 To the shores of the Summer ocean,
 To his love 'neath the Southern Cross!

FRANK ROE BATCHELDER.



A HAPPIER VARIETY

JAGGLES—Do you think the woman with a past has had her day?
 WAGGLES—For the time being. Now that Christmas is here we'll have
 nothing but the woman with a present.



IN RE SANTA CLAUS

THAT he's up-to-date we may well believe;
 It ever has been his way;
 So when he shows up this Christmas Eve
 It should be in a deerless sleigh.

THE CHARACTER-CHANGER

By Barry Pain

MY friend in the Inland Revenue Office said: "Do you know what a character-changer is?"

"No."

"No more do I; no more does anybody else that I have asked. I came upon it in an income-tax paper, brought to me because there was some irregularity in it. The man paying the tax declares that his income is derived from the profession of character-changer."

I suggested that it might possibly be a music-hall performer who assumed many different parts.

"Anyone could have thought of that," said my friend. "That's not it. Do music-hall performers pay income tax on twenty-three hundred pounds a year?"

"What is his name?"

"You know perfectly that I cannot give you his name or anything about him. These things are strictly confidential."

"Then we'll talk about something else," I said.

"'Edward Franks, 3 Laburnum Terrace, N. W.' For heaven's sake, don't let him know that you got it from me!"

"I shall be secrecy itself. I'll tell you all about it in a day or two."

The houses in Laburnum Terrace are good houses, letting for one hundred and fifty pounds a year, detached, with gardens and billiard-rooms and all the comforts.

Mr. Franks was a man of about thirty, particularly well dressed and well groomed. There were both imagination and shrewdness in his face.

The eye was poetical, the mouth thin and severe, the chin strong. He begged me to be seated, and asked what he could do for me.

"The case is very simple," I said.

"The other day I was talking to a friend at the club, who knows both of us, on the subject of strange professions. He mentioned your name and said that you were a character-changer, but he refused to explain in what the profession consisted. I at once made a bet with him that I should find out in three days. I never lose a bet."

At this moment my glance fell on Mr. Franks, and I noticed that his eyes were blazing with anger and his foot tapping impatiently on the floor. I continued: "As I have said, I never lose a bet. The simplest and pleasantest way of winning this one was to come to you direct and put the simple question to you. If you would prefer not to answer, say so, and I will go at once, with many apologies for my visit; but I must add that in that case I shall be compelled to find out in some other way."

"Was this mutual friend of whom you speak," he inquired, "the Duke of Scotsburg?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Young Scotsburg always struck me as an indiscreet man. Of course, my rule is that none of my clients is at liberty to mention either my name and address or profession to anybody without very good reason to believe that the person to whom the disclosure is made will in his turn become a client, and that, I understand, is not your intention?"

"Certainly it is not."

"You have not yet told me if it was the Duke."

"I am afraid," I said, "that I must decline to——"

"You need not speak, then. I knew from the start that it must have been he. I shall never take another client with a chin as small as that; at any rate, not without a substantial money guarantee. Indiscretions like this would very soon ruin my business. However, I shall be revenged on Scotsburg, because I shall make him lose his bet. I shall tell you all.

"There is a great deal of discontent in the world," said Mr. Franks, leaning back in his chair, crossing his legs and lighting a cigar.

"A great deal," I assented.

"It has been traced to drink," Mr. Franks went on, "and to gambling, and to the reading of penny stories about pirates, and to the want of a mother's guiding hand, and to evil companionship, and to many other things."

"I have read something of the sort," I said.

"But," said Mr. Franks, "the commonest form of discontent is that which arises in a man because he does not produce on his friends and acquaintances the impression that he wishes to produce. Things are, as a matter of fact, very much what they seem. If a man, for instance, is considered to be cruel, and appears cruel, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he *is* cruel. Very often, as in the case of cruelty or any other objectionable quality, he tries to conceal it." Mr. Franks laughed. "These amateur attempts at character-changing amuse me immensely. They are so pettifogging and cowardly; there are no bold strokes, no *coups*, no inventions, no study of details—in a word, no art. I believe there never was a moment in the world when hypocrisy was at so low an ebb as at present. The intention is there all right, but the means to carry it out are wanting——"

He paused a moment, and added—"unless you employ Mr. Edward

Franks, character-changer; and his terms are high. I have made a special study of this business. I enable a man to produce temporarily, and sometimes even permanently, the impression that he wishes. I employ more agents than any private detective in London. I could give you a list of some twenty journals that are subsidized by me. My income for the last year, to give you the exact figures, was £17,425-8-11, and for years past it has never been under ten thousand. My business is one of the few in London in which there is still plenty of room for competition, but the competitor will have to be a man of tact, of varied knowledge, of considerable courage and of absolute discretion."

I did not like to refer to that delicate question of the income tax, though I had noticed the discrepancy in figures. I said: "I should not have thought there were so many people in England anxious to be thought different from what they really are and willing to pay hard cash to effect the change in their reputation."

"Quite so," said Mr. Franks; "most people are of your opinion, and that is why I have the field to myself; but it is not really the case. Consider, for instance, the shady type of city man who, at the age of forty-five, has made his pile in more or less doubtful ways and has given up business. He retires to the country. He hunts two days a week, and nobody speaks to him. Plenty of people call on him, but not the people that he wants. He would like to stand for Parliament, but there are too many ugly stories about him. That is a simple and very usual case. A man wants whitewashing. I come and whitewash him. I charge him two thousand, and it costs me, say, five hundred in out-of-pocket expenses. Suppose, for instance, that the widow and the orphan were defrauded by the Gilt-Edged Investment Association, and our city man is generally known to have been himself, by himself, the Gilt-Edged Investment Association. I invent a partner and

work him on the Spenlow and Jorkins lines. Letters come enclosing receipts for large sums from widows and orphans, speaking of our friend's self-sacrificing and magnanimous conduct in bearing the whole of the loss himself and shielding his partner for the sake of his partner's children. One of those letters goes through the local post office accidentally unfastened; one or two are left about in our friend's library, where his servants can see them. One is dropped by accident at the charity bazaar at which he is making large purchases. But that is merely a trifle—only one of the many possible ingredients of the whitewash. I do not give you the entire recipe for the fluid, because, speaking candidly, the business is a good business and I want to keep it to myself. Many of my patrons are actors, many are parsons, many are authors. They do not all come for whitewash, of course. I have known a man to wish to become black-washed. I had to procure for a young curate of twenty-seven, with no vices and no knowledge of the world, the reputation of a seasoned roué. He had good reasons for asking it, and I did what he wanted, though I own that it was tough work."

"And what," I asked, "do you find is most in demand? What character is it that most people wish to assume?"

"Well," said Franks, meditatively, "they do not put it in the phrase that I shall use, but certainly what a great number of my clients want, and will pay large sums to obtain, is the reputation that they conceal the iron hand in the velvet glove. And, curiously enough, that is one of the most difficult reputations to set up. A sheep in wolf's clothing generally gets bowled out sooner or later, if I may mix my metaphors a little. They are all right while I am with them. I get the reputation started. I give them most careful directions how it is to be sustained, but too frequently it ends in disappointment. They will open their mouths and bleat, and then the wolf's skin is a poor disguise."

"What was it," I asked, "that you did for the Duke of Scotsburg?"

"I take pleasure," he answered, vindictively, "in telling you. He has given me away, and now I will give him away. He walks all right now, doesn't he?"

I do not know the Duke and have never seen him, but I answered: "Certainly; as well as you or I."

"Did you ever hear, some time ago, that he limped very badly—that one leg was shorter than the other?"

I remembered that I had seen a picture of him in a society paper in which he was represented as using two very handsome ebony walking-sticks. I mentioned the picture.

"The Scotsburgs are always hard up and have been hard up for two generations. They have always had enormous families, and, as a rule, nineteen out of every twenty Scotsburgs are black sheep. The present Duke is the blackest of the black."

"What has that got to do with his limp?" I asked—"with one leg being shorter than the other?"

"One leg never was any shorter than the other, and he never limped, except of his own free will. It was I who got him the reputation for a slight difference in the length of his legs and for the slight limp. You see, it was not a very easy business. At the age of twenty-five he had to start a congenital defect; and people who had known him for the most of those twenty-five years wanted to know why they had never noticed it before."

"How did you get over that?"

"Simplicity itself. I became known as Scotsburg's intimate friend. I had been at school with him, I had been at college with him, it was said. I had to have an indiscreet moment in a smoking-room when there were plenty of men there of the kind who would talk, and to refer to the specially constructed boot that enabled him to conceal his infirmity. Scotsburg flew into a rage and called me a liar. He tucked one foot under the couch on which he was sitting. When he got up to go people unostentatiously and with as much delicacy as possible

looked at that foot. The sole of the boot was certainly thicker than that of the other. Then came the day when he owned up, when he said that he could not go through the awful agony that the patent boot caused him any more, and that he would sooner go through the world a helpless cripple. After that came the limp and the two walking-sticks. I must say that so far he did his part admirably. He really seemed to have some talent for acting. But I got to be very nervous indeed about that limp. Every now and then he would forget it. I have seen him, at the time when he had given up the patent boot and was in consequence supposed to be an incurable cripple for life, run the length of Euston platform at top speed in order to catch a train. If he had been recognized all my work would have been undone. I told him that he would have to limp always, even when he was by himself, in order to get into the habit of it, or I should give up the case."

"But," I asked, "why on earth should the Duke of Scotsburg, who, so you tell me, is hard up, pay you money in order to have it generally supposed that one of his legs is shorter than the other, and that in consequence he walks lame?"

"We are coming to that. Some months afterward, when his lameness was a matter of frequent and sympathetic reference in London papers and London society, he was playing billiards at the club; he is quite up to professional form, you know, and a good many men were watching the game. As he was hobbling round the table a man who knew him slightly said:

"You could cure that leg of yours in a fortnight, if you liked."

"No, I couldn't," said the Duke; "I'd give all I possess to be able to do it."

"Did you," said the other man, "ever try Chimmons's Remedial Tissue?"

"Never heard of it," said the Duke. Then I joined in.

"Here, old man," I said, "don't

you try any of those infernal quack preparations. They'll only make you worse."

The Duke again lost his temper with me. He told me to go to the devil, and he could mind his own business without any advice from me. I told him to take Chimmons's Remedial Tissue for his temper at the same time, and went out. The Duke wrote down on his shirt cuff the name of the remedy and the name of the place where it could be procured. Three weeks afterward the world was astonished to find that his lameness had vanished and that there was no longer anything the matter with him."

"Even now I do not see it," I said.

"You can't miss it. The Duke is now the chairman of Chimmons's Remedial Tissue, Limited, and in a position to give an excellent personal reason for having joined the board. He gives no printed testimonial to the Remedial Tissue, but the thing is known and talked about, and that is better than a printed advertisement. His director's fees are very handsome and he gets them regularly, and the terms on which he consented to act as chairman of the board, though they have never been revealed, must have been highly profitable to him. Otherwise, he would never have paid me with so much readiness and gratitude the somewhat high fee that I asked for my part in the transaction."

"I see," I said, meditatively; "it must be very much more difficult for you when the change required is of a physical kind."

"So difficult," said Mr. Franks, "as to be sometimes impossible. Women who have lost their youth want it back again; women who have lost their beauty want it back again. Very often I decline the case altogether. Sometimes I succeed. I made a special study of that branch."

"And," I continued, "I suppose you supplement your income considerably from the sale of toilet articles which you have discovered to be specially suited for the purpose?"

"Good heavens, no!" he replied. "I am not a chemist or a barber. I

recommend nothing of the kind and use nothing of the kind. The changes that I effect are always changes in character. I do not make a person young or beautiful. I make people think that they are young or beautiful. If it could all be done with a sovereign's worth of facial massage, cucumber cream, rice powder and rot of that kind, they would not come to me. It wouldn't be business."

"Then," I said, "how do you manage it?"

"I won't give away my secret in detail, but I will tell you the main lines on which I work. I start on the theory that I have proved over and over again that ninety-nine people in every hundred pretend to reverence beauty, and not one person in every hundred knows it when he sees it. They wait for twelve hours outside the pit door of the Lyceum—because they see the beauty of Shakespeare? Not a bit of it. They would be happier at a melodrama. They are the ninety-and-nine unjust persons to whom I have alluded. I take, say, a passably plain woman. If she wishes to be beautiful she probably does a little cucumber-cream business. She is quite elementary and childish, and it takes her no further. The first thing I teach her is to behave as if she were beautiful. All beautiful women have a distinct manner of their own. There are seventy-four special points to be noted in the behavior of a beautiful woman. My client has to learn these and practice them daily until she adopts them unconsciously. Then my agents begin to work. In one place and another they say boldly that my client is a beautiful woman. I have a special photograph taken of her—the man who takes these for me is really a genius. That gets into the papers. It is so like her that it cannot be mistaken, and yet it is undeniably beautiful. And you know that most people think that photographs cannot lie. Every woman has some good point, and I am careful to note what my client's good point is. I get it talked about, I get it alluded to in what are

called society papers. Of course there are some objectors, some people who say confidentially to each other that everybody seems to consider Miss So-and-So very beautiful, but for the life of them they cannot see it. That does not matter. The general impression is made. Of course, no woman who comes to me with this request is allowed to manage her own dresses. I have a little Frenchwoman who works exclusively for me and has a marvelous talent in arranging things of that kind. Still, I own that such cases are difficult. I would sooner try to produce the effect of courage, for instance, as in the case of Peter Arlingford."

"Who was he?" I asked.

"Oh, that was a case of no interest. A big, fine-looking fellow, but his heart was not very strong, and, consequently, he had no courage. It seemed ridiculous for him, being so big, to be considered a coward, so he put himself into my hands. He was a little trouble at the start. One of my agents, an exceedingly accomplished swimmer, had a sham suicide off the Embankment. Arlingford was to go in after him. He was a very fair swimmer himself. Of course, there would have been no actual rescue. But there would have been the credit of it. Arlingford changed his mind at the last moment and would not go in. But we got him his reputation all right afterward. People who know him very well say now that many a man who wears the V. C. hasn't half the pluck of Peter Arlingford."

"Tell me some more."

"I am afraid I have no more time to give you, unless I can regard you as a client. Would you like to be considered wealthy? That is one of the easiest of my transformations. Give me three weeks, and your bank will let you overdraw a thousand without an atom of security, and never think it worth while to write to you about it."

"No, thanks," I said, "I am quite contented. My appointment in the Inland Revenue Office is all that I

require. I have made a note on my cuff that you mentioned your income as £17,425-8-11. Your return gives your income at £2,300. You may have an opportunity later of explaining the discrepancy."

Mr. Franks was not in the least perturbed.

"Since," he said, "you are quite contented with your character, it is probably good. I am afraid I must tell you that in a fortnight's time the whole story will be known of your

connection with the Liberator frauds, with Monson, and with one or two other little things."

"One each," I observed; "and me to play. If I were far too honorable to make any use of a private conversation for the purposes of my official work, you on your side would hardly run the risk that must attend the promulgation of scandals and libels."

"A drawn game," he replied. And we parted.



HARLEQUIN AT YULE

BEHOLD! my toast is to the merry fool!
Oh, men of mighty knowledge and much wit,
When at the volume's close your name is writ,
Ask of the drained brain what profits it?

Behold! my toast is to the merry fool!
Ye men who wrangle in the crowded mart
And bite the gold and toss the dross apart,
How drags the purse that hangs upon a heart?

Behold! my toast is to the merry fool!
Oh, ye that pry into the mysteries
And scan the gate of Death with puzzled eyes.
Lo! at the end, who sifts the truth from lies?

Behold! my toast is to the merry fool!
Time, like a skull, laughs last at gain and power.
See! wine is red, and all the world's a flower.
Let us wring out the sweetness of our hour—
Behold! my toast is to the merry fool!

MCCREA PICKERING.



THE POINT OF VIEW

DAISY BROWNING—I'm so glad to hear you say you like the New Year chimes at old Trinity; it shows you have poetry in your soul.

JACK WROUNDER—I wouldn't miss them for the world, my dear. Every year I go down there with a big fish-horn.

THE LITTLE OLD MAN

By John Regnault Ellyson

HIS father had died in Andova and left a great fortune. His mother, a woman of wayward spirit and artistic instincts, had been for three years in Italy studying the masters. Young Ambroise was, therefore, unembarrassed save as regards an exceptional income. He was twenty-two, vigorous and resolute, but indiscreet and conscious of far more ability than he possessed, yet clever, in a way, and handsome. The rather gay life he led brought the conviction that nothing had permanent value but the pleasures of the hour; excitements, convivialities and good-fellowships—did not these, in fact, make the world endurable?

But there are some few incidental shadows, now and then, thrown into the midst of life to emphasize, by contrast, the brighter side of existence, and it happened one morning, when a sudden shower passed over the city and the cab ordered failed to arrive, that Ambroise grew nettled and started out on foot for the club where he usually breakfasted. He had not gone very far before he found that an umbrella was of little use, for the wind was excessively high and the rain drifted. At the end of the second block, as he neared the curbstone, his umbrella disappeared, and only by great effort he kept on his feet.

He glanced forward with the idea of leaping the stream in front of him, but, while hesitating and measuring with his eye the width of it, he observed someone, who tripped by him, lose his balance on the wet curbing and tumble headlong into the water flowing in the gutter. He seemed a mere lad, and his grotesque struggles

made Ambroise smile, but he advanced at once, seized the fellow by the trousers, and landed him on the pavement by his side.

It was a good deed done in a mock-heroic way, and pleased both parties. The victim of the accident, Ambroise noted, was not a lad, as he at first supposed, but a little elderly man, who, slim and sinewy, poorly dressed, and now sadly bespattered, looked up at his rescuer fixedly with a pair of wonderfully keen, small eyes, and pressed his hand with grim energy. The upturned face was like a strange bit of old parchment, curiously seamed and shriveled—a grave, sharp, insinuating, pathetic, perplexing face that could not be easily forgotten.

"I thank you," said he; "I thank you. You'll never regret your service, I assure you. And let me thank you again sincerely."

The next instant he turned and hurried on his way. Ambroise did likewise, but somehow the old face lingered before the young man and the words kept ringing in his ears.

There was, after all, more wind than rain—a sudden shower with a splendid outburst of sunlight in its trail—and so, laughing at the odd adventure, Ambroise soon reached the club, made some slight change in his attire and ordered breakfast. While he sipped his coffee he could still see the faint outlines of the old brown face and still hear the fluctuating tones of the very peculiar voice. He was sorry he had not asked the little person—poor varlet though he might be—to join him in a meal. He would have been glad to have another real glimpse of him, glad to have learned

something of his character, to have fathomed his thoughts, to have examined in a more leisurely manner the features that seemed so unfamiliar, and to have listened to the brisk, cordial phrases of the singular little creature.

For that day and the night following Ambroise amused himself with his adventure. He spoke of it everywhere, especially at the Academy. In the green-room that night, Mademoiselle Davano, surrounded by her friends, made endless fun of the history he related.

"Are you aware of what you have done, my champion?" said she. "Why, you've done the worst thing in the world a man could do. It's inconceivable in America; in the provinces of France it sometimes happens. I had a brother that performed the same feat once, and one day he was missing, and nobody ever saw him afterward, but everybody from the first foresaw the course events would take. He rescued the devil, and the devil was to pay. See, gentlemen, here's another good Christian who has saved the fallen angel—a sweet lad, who innocently picked the old knave out of the water. My friend, have you any relics about you? By all means get something of the kind. I've a ring the Pope blessed—wouldn't you wear it for my sake, my dear boy? Ah, you smile now, and even that's a bad sign—my brother did the same, I remember. But wait—wait till he comes again and demands the forfeit. Do you think you'll smile at that moment as you do now? And will he ride then on a stick, or creep like a cat, or crawl like a snake? Indeed, who knows?"

II

THE queer little personage was quickly out of mind, for now Ambroise could not long think of anyone but the bewitching Davano. Day by day, the friends at the club, the rare meals there, the wines, the pleasantries of social life and its games lost their

charm. Night after night, in ravishing colors and silkiest textures, Mademoiselle dazzled his eyes and vanquished his heart anew and sang songs that enchanted. She was lovable, gay, brilliant. She found a docile and agreeable victim in the young man, accepted everything, and more than a dozen times passed to the verge of compromising herself—then paused.

And when she did yield at last, she yielded with unanticipated grace and abandon, and caused great wonder and scandal in Andova. The dear gossips never had a more delicious morsel to roll over on their tongues. Go among them and gather the details, if you please. I shall merely say that Ambroise furnished magnificent apartments and that he entertained lavishly. Perhaps the worst of it was that after two weeks he was still as infatuated as ever, still as sadly blinded.

Among the companions who beguiled considerable time there at his expense was M. Cherub, the leader of the Academy orchestra. The master of the house surely had no fears of him, for, though a man of many talents, Monsieur was so swarthy, so insignificant, with such a wry face and such crooked legs—in a word, a pathetically ridiculous creature, whom everybody laughed at and everybody pitied. Mademoiselle kept up her popularity and her position on the stage, and it was he who very properly continued teaching her new songs, new cadences, new rhythms, new ideas, too, in the dance, new fascinating points and parcels of drollery, sly touches and the like, and he taught these things with infinite skill and infinite delight; so let it be observed that, while in no degree comely, certainly he was exceedingly useful.

Two weeks and two days went by, and then one evening Ambroise walked into an empty Eden. The twain had taken wings—the capricious Davano and the ingenious Cherub. The perfumed note contained nothing and yet everything—three very sweet

words that bit like acid. The young man swore and uttered dire threats, and stormed—all alone, indoors, between the four walls of the beautiful chamber. After he had torn his passion to tatters he sat down and wept. It was cruelly sad, indeed: Clouds were above him and under him, and there were dark clouds in the future, sombre clouds that had gathered in the past, melancholy clouds; and his brain swayed with the motion of them, and for a time he could only just distinguish himself in the mirror at the end of the chamber with a pistol in hand aimed at his heart. He was pressing the instrument against his breast, when someone touched his arm.

He turned.

The Little Old Man of the gutter had entered, God knows how.

"Oh, my young friend," said he, plaintively, "this will never do. You must pardon me, but I have gone over the selfsame thing—along the same path—and yet I live, and have had the honor of thanking heaven every morning during many years for the unknown pleasure that's in life. Come, let us sit down and talk and look into affairs."

And the Little Old Man whispered soothingly, chirped and chatted so strangely, so learnedly, with so much ease and sweetness and charm, in so naïve and fraternal a style, sipped wine so freely, and was so wise and clever and satirical, that Ambroise sat like one under a spell and filled the glasses and drank, and grew drowsy, and rested his head on the edge of the table . . . and when he woke, his guest had gone—and so had the idea of self-immolation on the altar of the false divinity.

III

By the end of the week Ambroise had summed up the costs, and discovered that his affairs were decidedly involved. There could, of course, be no danger of a complete collapse, but the income for a year or two might be

required in advance, and this was anything but flattering. The thought added a pinch to injuries already irritating enough, and he adopted means of extricating himself that merely entangled him more hopelessly.

He sought favors at hazard. Night after night he sat and played, and lost. The game being limited at the club, he passed to Mobray's, where there were larger risks and finer chances. He tried roulette with fair fortune, briefly, for three nights, and with lamentable loss for an equal period. He wasted his vitality, grew haggard, drank, laid wagers recklessly, dreamed of brilliant turns, and realized surprising reverses. By day he contrived those well-known inevitable schemes for breaking the bank, and at night he went from table to table, pursuing his high aims, with a death-like level of incontestably bad luck. As necessity required, he borrowed from various sources and signed notes innumerable, thereby giving rise to much caustic comment and sorely taxing the patience of his friends. He despaired at times, and then, with rekindling hopes, began afresh with good prospects and finished with new disaster.

Meanwhile, he centred on faro. One evening, wearied and pale, yet eager and alert, he was unusually absorbed in his clearly defined project. The tables were crowded—thickly beset with restless hands and feverish faces. Fortune was on the side of the bank, and the flow of coin was steadily that way. Ambroise watched its unmistakable drift, and the heart in him gradually became chilled; he paused, swept the mist from before his eyes and glanced at his next neighbor, who was risking nothing, but seemed intent on the game. The young man instantly drew back with surprise, almost with alarm.

"Play on the ace," said the Little Old Man at his elbow.

And so he did. In fact, he played and continued to play in accordance with the sweet, intermittent whisper of his shriveled companion. He

played throughout the evening, and deep into the night he was still playing. His companion, with a curious look in his keen eyes, sedate, impassive and full of adroit suggestions, gathered the chips, converted them into currency, and when, in the early dawn, the bank confessed itself broke, he handed the package of notes to Ambroise, who fell on the neck of his benefactor and embraced him with warmth.

"Now that you are awake," said the little man, quietly, "now that you are awake and rewarded, quit the game."

Strangers, well-wishers—everybody—pressed forward, and Ambroise, considerably dazed, received their many congratulations; but a moment afterward, when he looked about for his old friend, he looked for him in vain. The Little Old Man was nowhere to be found.

IV

NATURALLY, at first, Ambroise marveled over the uncommon event of the night; then he reflected seriously, summed up the proceeds of the run on the bank, settled all accounts, and deposited the balance in his bank. Success, instead of turning his head, had, indeed, an admirable effect upon him in the main; but, while he straightened out his affairs, while he pondered over the mystery of the Little Old Man of the gutter and sought his benefactor in every nook and corner, he likewise thought much of the bewitching, the fickle, the treacherous Davano, the memory of whose looks and graces yet lingered vividly in his dreams.

He had much to regret and something to be proud of, but he could not quite disentangle himself from the romantic past, in which Davano had played so ample a part. True, it was impossible to forgive her; it was equally impossible to wipe out her image or to ignore the traces of her that remained.

A week afterward, on a quiet even-

ing strolling through one of the thoroughfares, he thought he caught a glimpse of the beauty in a passing cab. She had returned—could it really be so? There was a second cab at the curbing, and, hailing the cabman, he said:

"Here, follow that cab ahead of us; and drive hard!"

And in he stepped. The second cab, however, did not follow the first cab, but a third, which happened also at the moment to be wheeling along rapidly.

Once inside the cab, Ambroise found there his singular friend of the gutter; and so unexpected was the encounter, so great was his astonishment, that he could utter no words. But the little gentleman, as befitted a beneficent genius, set his tongue wagging at once.

"Well, well," said he, pleasantly, tenderly—"well, so we come together again oddly enough, don't we? And somehow it happens we meet at very critical moments. Is it pure chance, I wonder, or is it providential? Be that as it may, I am always so glad to be of fresh service to you—ever so happy! Perhaps you aren't over-pleased this time—ah, I see it plainly—and yet you shouldn't complain. I am no moralist; I love adventures myself—I love the good things of the world. Don't be perplexed, therefore, nor annoyed. Never fear, my friend, never fear! I think I take in the situation fully, far better than you do, and I certainly approve of your excellent taste! I speak candidly—I speak seriously; in spite of the comments of the uncharitable, she is without a peer—the lady in the cab ahead of us. She is worthy of the beauty she possesses; she has surpassing merits, and, like all charming women, she has surprising caprices. Ah, as you see, I know perfectly; I understand thoroughly all the bearings of the case. You were deceived sadly in some respects; but things are not always what they seem—once in a while they are exactly what they do not seem. Unquestionably, there are circumstances that require a cer-

tain position, a certain point of view, to render them clear and intelligible. In a moment you will gain such a point, and the scales will fall from your eyes. Yes, and you will then meet this true lady of your heart. For some time the seas have swept between you, but now she is here once more. I am confident you love her; in the depth of your being you adore her. Be assured—whatever your doubts are—that no love equals her love. Truly, you are the hope, the dream of her life, the flower of her soul, and all I say is: Have a care, be considerate, and put no shadow between your loves. There, my friend, the cab pauses; let us get out."

Then, as the door opened, the two alighted. In an instant, Ambroise, leaping quickly forward, flushed to his ears, grew dizzy and trembled slightly as he confronted the lady descending from the cab that had halted a step beyond. Were they both charmed? Presumably, for they embraced ardently, touched lips, shed tears and smiled.

"Oh, mother!" murmured the young man.

"My darling!"

"Indeed, what happiness!"

"How handsome you've grown in three years—a little pale, but the same dear boy!"

"And you are adorably beautiful!"

"My dear, does my return surprise you in the least?"

"Yes, yes, in spite of the fact that I know your ways; but, mother, I say, tell me, if you can, who's this strange creature, my comrade, here just back of us?"

"Oh, he's the late Count Rozenack—"

"Positively, you make my flesh crawl! Why the *late* Count——?"

"I say so merely because he's no longer a Count."

"And pray, who is he now?"

"An ingenious old friend of mine, whose love I declined, but whose services I accepted."

"How's that?"

"For the last three years, my boy, I have paid him well to look after your welfare in my absence."

"Ah, you don't say so!" exclaimed the young man, turning as he folded his fingers in his palm.

But luckily there was no one in sight. Only a moment before the little enigmatic, leathery-faced old gentleman had re-entered his cab, and it had quietly rolled away.



THE MISTLETOE GIRL

THE rosy-cheeked maid, the enchanter!
At Christmas-time charms you instanter.
When chased for a kiss,
This obliging young miss
Allows you to win in a canter.

J. J. O'CONNELL.



THE ETERNAL FITNESS

JAGGLES—What did he do with that Japanese dwarf-tree he bought?

WAGGLES—Since he moved into a flat he uses it every year for a Christmas tree.

THE SKELETON

THE house is gay with guests from near and far,
 But oh, the closet door has swung ajar,
 And lest they glimpse the skeleton within,
 Oh, let the music and the dance begin!

Bid all the dancers laugh and shout and sing.
 Oh! let them fill the house with roistering!
 Ah, see, the crack is widening still more!
 Go join the dance, and I will guard the door.

The last note dies upon the dark. The feast
 Is over, and day climbs the crimson east.
 The last late guest is gone. The dance is done.
 Come, you and I must face the skeleton!

ETHEL M. KELLEY.



LOVE'S LITANY

IN the sanctuary of my heart is enshrined my Belovèd! From the first blush of dawn to the last dew of evening, the incense of roses steals up to the throne.

Hail, my heart's Belovèd! All the thoughts and dreams of my life, waking or sleeping, are laid at the foot of this altar, and the radiance of my rarest worship envelops and surrounds it.

Hail, my heart's Belovèd! Here, hidden from the gaze of all the world, lives the essence of my idol, cherished, nurtured, held in close embrace, lifting me upward and onward, supplying the wings of hope.

Hail, my heart's Belovèd! In exaltation the day is passed, in realized hopes the dreams of the night.

Hail, my heart's Belovèd! Rosaries upon rosaries of prayer and blessing issue from my soul, in gratitude and welcome to my silent Love; and the well-springs of my tears freshen the garden of my heart, my Love's dwelling!

Hail, my heart's Belovèd! Ah, the heaven of this dreaming, this unreality, this illusion! All the real glories, tangible and substantial, are not worth one moment of this exaltation, this self-deception, this absolute nothing which is my all.

Hail, my heart's Belovèd!

SADIE MARTINOT.



AT GLAD NEW YEAR

DE GARRY—It won't be long before you'll forget you ever promised to love me.

MADGE—Don't say that, dear. I wrote it down in my new diary last night.

LE VRAI HONNÊTE HOMME

Par Octave Mirbeau

LA nuit dernière je dormais profondément, quand je fus réveillé en sursaut par un grand bruit—quelque chose comme la chute d'un meuble dans le salon voisin. En même temps, la pendule sonna quatre heures, et mon chat se mit à miauler lamentablement.

Je sautai à bas du lit et, vivement, sans précautions, avec une intrépidité qu'explique seule l'ardeur de mes convictions conservatrices, j'ouvris la porte et pénétrai dans la pièce.

Le salon était tout éclairé, et ce que j'aperçus d'abord, ce fut un monsieur, fort élégant, en tenue de soirée, décoré, ma foi! et qui bourrait d'objets précieux une jolie valise en cuir jaune.

La valise ne m'appartenait pas, mais les objets précieux étaient bien à moi; je vis donc là une opération contradictoire et malséante, contre laquelle je me disposai à protester.

Bien que je ne connusse pas du tout ce monsieur, il avait pourtant un visage qui m'était familier et comme on en rencontre sur les boulevards, au théâtre, dans les restaurants de nuit, aux fêtes religieuses et patriotiques—un de ces visages corrects et soignés qui vous font dire de ceux à qui ils appartiennent: "Ce doit être un homme de cercle!"

Prétendre que je n'eusse pas le moindre étonnement de voir, chez moi, à quatre heures du matin, un monsieur, en habit, et que je n'avais pas convié à y venir, cela serait exagéré. Mais cet étonnement ne se doublait d'aucun autre sentiment, frayeur ou colère, dont s'accompagnent ordinairement ces visites nocturnes. L'air d'élégance et de bonne

humeur de ce *clubman* m'avait tout de suite rassuré; car, je dois le confesser, je ne m'attendais à rien de tel, et je craignais plutôt de me trouver face à face avec une horrible brute de cambrioleur, et qu'il fallût me livrer contre lui à des actes de violence défensive, pour lesquels je ne me sens pas d'inclination, vu qu'on ne sait pas toujours comment ils finissent.

À ma vue, l'élégant inconnu s'était interrompu dans son travail et, avec un sourire d'ironie bienveillante, il me dit:

"Excusez-moi, monsieur, de vous avoir si impoliment réveillé. Mais ce n'est pas tout à fait de ma faute. Vous avez des meubles bien sensitifs, vraiment, et que l'approche de la plus légère pince-monseigneur fait aussitôt tomber en pâmoison."

Je vis alors que la pièce était toute bouleversée; des tiroirs ouverts et vidés, des vitrines fracturées, un petit secrétaire empire où je cache mes valeurs et mes bijoux de famille, piteusement renversé sur le tapis. Un vrai pillage, enfin! Et pendant que je faisais ces constatations, le trop matinal visiteur, en continuant de bourrer sa valise, me disait de sa voix bien timbrée:

"Oh! ces meubles modernes! Comme ils ont l'âme fragile, n'est-ce pas? Je crois qu'ils sont atteints, eux aussi, de la maladie du siècle, et qu'ils sont neurasthéniques, comme tout le monde."

Et il souligna sa plaisanterie d'un petit rire, discret et charmant, qui ne me blessa point et où se révélait, à tout prendre, un homme de la meilleure éducation.

Ma foi, je le remarquai; c'est chose si rare aujourd'hui!

Je me décidai pourtant à intervenir. Mais me voulant pas me montrer inférieur à lui en bonne grâce:

"A qui ai-je l'honneur de parler?" fis-je simplement.

D'ailleurs je suivais maintenant d'un regard sans inquiétude les manœuvres du nocturne visiteur. Il avait l'air tellement homme du monde!

Je me souviens qu'un courant d'air, produit par les portes ouvertes, agitait ridiculement les pans de ma chemise, et que cela me mit dans quelque gêne.

"Mon Dieu!" répondit ce parfait *gentleman* sur un ton dégagé, "mon nom vous serait peut-être, en ce moment, une surprise trop vive. D'ailleurs, ne pensez-vous pas qu'il vaut mieux réserver, pour une occasion moins étrange, une présentation que je souhaite prochaine et que, du reste, je puis vous l'avouer, je ne cherchais nullement aujourd'hui?—bien que rien ne puisse m'être plus agréable, croyez-le. Je voudrais, si vous y consentez, garder, pour l'instant, le plus strict incognito."

"Soit, monsieur! Je serais désolé de vous désobliger. Mais, tout ceci ne m'explique pas—"

"Ma présence chez vous à une heure aussi exagérée, et dans un tel désordre?"

"C'est cela! Et je vous saurais gré—"

"Comment donc!" acquiesça l'éléгант inconnu, "votre curiosité est fort légitime, et je ne songe pas à m'y soustraire. Mais, pardon! Puisque vous désirez que nous fassions un petit bout de causerie, ne pensez-vous pas qu'il serait prudent à vous de passer un vêtement de chambre? Votre déshabillé me navre. Il fait froid ici—et l'on a vite fait d'attraper la grippe, en ces temps bizarres."

"C'est juste—et vous avez toutes les délicatesses. Veuillez donc m'excuser une minute."

"Faites, monsieur, faites."

Je gagnai mon cabinet de toilette, où j'endossai rapidement une robe de chambre, et je revins auprès de l'in-

connu qui, durant ma courte absence, s'était mis à rétablir un peu d'ordre dans la pièce encombrée de ses effractions.

"Laissez, monsieur, laissez, je vous prie," lui fis-je; "mon domestique rangera tout cela, demain. Ne vous donnez pas cette peine—"

Je lui offris un siège; j'en pris un moi-même; et, ayant allumé un cigare, je lui dis sur un ton encourageant:

"Monsieur, je vous écoute."

Le *clubman* eût pu se recueillir, comme font tous les héros de roman, avant de conter leur histoire. Il évita, en homme d'esprit, cette banalité, et, tout de suite, il commença:

"Monsieur, je suis un voleur, un voleur professionnel. Disons le mot, si vous voulez, un cambrioleur. Vous l'avez sans doute deviné?"

"Parfaitement!"

"Cela fait honneur à votre perspicacité."

"Oh, vous savez, n'importe qui s'en serait douté."

Il continua:

"Je ne me suis décidé à embrasser cette position sociale qu'après avoir bien constaté que, dans les temps troublés où nous vivons, elle était encore la plus franche, la plus loyale—tranchons le mot—la plus *honnête* de toutes!"

"Voilà," dis-je, "un charmant paradoxe!"

"Nullement, monsieur, je vous assure. Et ce serait mal reconnaître votre si cordiale hospitalité que de ne pas vous parler sérieusement. Le vol, monsieur—et je dis le vol comme je dirais le barreau, la littérature, la peinture, la médecine, l'industrie, la religion—le vol fut une carrière décriée, parce que tous ceux qui s'y destinèrent jusqu'ici n'étaient, la plupart, que d'odieuses brutes, de répugnants vagabonds, des gens sans éducation et sans élégance. Or, je prétends lui redonner un lustre auquel elle a droit et faire du vol une carrière libérale, honorable et enviée."

"Je ne demande pas mieux car, en

principe, je suis pour les réformes sociales. Mais je ne serais pas fâché de savoir comment vous arriverez à celle-ci."

"De la façon la plus simple. Ne nous payons pas de mots, monsieur, et envisageons la vie telle qu'elle est. Le vol est l'unique préoccupation de l'homme. On ne choisit une profession, quelle qu'elle soit, remarquez-le bien, que parce qu'elle nous permet de voler plus ou moins et selon nos aptitudes particulières, mais enfin de voler quelque chose à quelqu'un, légalement ou sous le couvert d'usages admis."

"Oh! Oh!" m'écriai-je. "Vous manquez de logique. Et ceux qui, comme moi, n'ont pas de profession?"

"On a toujours une profession!" répliqua l'inconnu, d'une voix grave. "Et ce sont précisément ceux-là qui ne semblent rien faire, qui sont les plus dangereux et les plus hypocrites filous."

Et, avec une grâce souriante, mais dans laquelle on sentait une fermeté pleine de menaces, il continua:

"Voyons, monsieur, vous avez l'esprit trop avisé, vous savez trop bien ce que cache le fallacieux décor de nos vertus et de notre honneur, pour que je sois forcé d'appuyer mon dire d'exemples probatoires et de concluantes énumérations."

Ces paroles m'avaient glacé. Pourtant elles me flattaient trop dans mes prétentions—d'ailleurs justifiées—à la psychologie et à la connaissance des sciences sociales, pour que je ne les accueillisse point par un homme évidemment péremptoire et supérieur.

L'élégant cambrioleur, encouragé, poursuivit son petit discours avec des gestes plus intimes, confidentiels:

"Je ne veux vous parler que de ce qui me concerne. Je serai très bref, du reste. J'ai débuté dans le haut commerce. Mais les sales besognes que, nécessairement, je dus accomplir—les ruses maléficieuses, les ignobles tromperies, les sophistications effrontées, les faux poids, répugnèrent vite à mon instinctive délicatesse, à ma nature franche empreinte de tant de cordialité et de tant de scrupules.

"Je quittai le commerce pour la finance!"

"Bientôt la finance me dégouta. Hélas! je ne pus me plier à lancer des affaires inexistantes, à émettre de faux papiers et de faux métaux, à organiser de fausses mines, de faux isthmes, de faux charbonnages, des cuirs en carton, des ciments en mie de pain et des matières de guerre en papier mâché! Penser perpétuellement à canaliser l'argent des autres vers mes coffres, à m'enrichir de la ruine lente, progressive de mes actionnaires et de mes clients, grâce à la vertu d'éblouissants prospectus et à la légalité de merveilleuses combinaisons capitalistes, devant lesquelles eût bronché l'âme, pourtant hardie, de Cartouche—tout cela me fut une opération inacceptable, à quoi se refusa mon esprit ennemi du mensonge.

"Je pensai, alors, au journalisme. Et j'entrai—suivant en cela mes préjugés mondains et mes convictions religieuses—dans la presse conservatrice et patriotique. Il ne me fallut pas un mois pour me convaincre de l'absolue vénalité de mon métier, et que, à moins de me livrer, contre les personnes et contre la patrie elle-même, à des chantages répugnants et compliqués, le journalisme ne nourrissait pas son homme.

"J'essayai de la politique!"

Ici, je ne pus m'empêcher, moi qui écoutait tout cela, de pousser un rire sonore qui menaca de s'éterniser.

"C'est cela," approuva le séduisant *gentleman*; "sur cette dernière carrière, inutile de dire autre chose!"

"Bref, j'épuisai, l'une après l'autre, tout ce que la vie publique ou privée peut offrir de professions sortables et de nobles carrières à un jeune homme actif, intelligent et délicat, comme je suis. Je vis clairement que le vol—de quelque nom qu'on l'affuble—était le but unique et l'unique ressort de toutes les activités humaines. Mais combien déformé, dissimulé, et par conséquent, combien plus dangereux!"

"Je me fis donc le raisonnement suivant: 'Puisque l'homme ne peut pas échapper à cette loi fatale du vol, il serait beaucoup plus honorable qu'il

le pratiquât loyalement, et qu'il n'entourât pas son naturel désir de s'approprier le bien d'autrui, d'excuses pompeuses, de qualités illusoires et de titres redondants, dont la parure euphémique ne trompe plus personne.'

"Alors je me mis à voler—carrément. Tous les jours, je volai. Je pénétrai, à la faveur de la nuit, dans des intérieurs riches. Je prélevai, une fois ici, une fois ailleurs, sur les caisses de mes concitoyens ce que je juge nécessaire à l'expansion de mes besoins, au développement de ma personnalité humaine. Cela me demande quelques heures par nuit, entre une causerie au cercle et un flirt au bal.

"Hormis ce temps, consacré au travail, je vis comme tout le monde. Je suis d'un club élégant, j'ai de belles relations. Le ministre m'a décoré de la Legion d'Honneur tout récemment. Je suis charitable, et quand j'ai fait un bon coup je suis accessible à toutes les générosités.

"Mon grand mérite, monsieur,

c'est que je ne trompe personne. Pour pénétrer chez vous, par exemple, je ne prends pas le masque d'un avocat, d'un banquier, d'un marchand de chevaux, n'importe qui desquels vous eût dévalisé tout aussi bien que je viens de le faire. J'accomplis loyalement, directement ce que tout le monde pratique par des détours tortueux et des voies ignominieuses. Enfin, ma conscience délivrée ne me reproche plus rien, car, de tous les êtres que je connais, je suis le seul qui ait courageusement conformé ses actes et ses idées, et adapté hermétiquement sa nature, à la signification réelle de la vie. Je suis l'Honnête Homme!"

Les bougies pâlissaient, le jour entrant par les fentes des persiennes. J'offris à l'élégant inconnu de partager mon déjeuner du matin. Mais il objecta qu'il était en habit et qu'il ne voulait pas m'offusquer par une telle incorrection.

Il reprit sa valise vide et avec un salut plein d'aimable aisance ouvrit la porte et partit.



TIMELY ADVICE

DON'T question if it's right or wrong,
That she is weak and you are strong,
Or if there's mistletoe or not,
But kiss her straightway on the spot.



PREPARING FOR THE JOHNNIES

THE MAID—Do you want a woolen stocking to hang up, Miss Footlite?
MISS FOOTLITE—Yes; all wool and a yard wide.



THE MAN-ABOUT-TOWN

ON New Year's Day, no doubt it nice is
To bid our faults a long adieu.
If he swore off from all his vices
He would not have a thing to do.

FIRST LOVE—AND SECOND

By Gwendolen Overton

LIBRARY in Mrs. Colney's country house. MRS. COLNEY, young, as the times go, tall, slender, individual—also divorcee. Has a book in her hand, but is looking out of window by which she sits, watching someone approaching the house.

MRS. COLNEY—He hates to do it. I dare say he calls it a nuisance and himself a hound. He expects me to be a little unmanageable, to make rather a scene—within decent limits—and he will be a little, just a little, disappointed if I don't. Poor dear! (*Turns and smiles up at THIRLWALL as he enters and closes the door.*) Where are the others—Anne and the lesser beings?

THIRLWALL (*flinging himself on a couch and piling cushions under his arm*)—I left them in the barn watching the men decorate for your Christmas dance.

MRS. COLNEY—And you came—

THIRLWALL—Back to my first love.

MRS. COLNEY (*humming*)—"But ah! 'tis not the newest love!"

THIRLWALL (*though with ears, hearing not*)—Are you so tired of us all after a week that you must needs withdraw from us to seek rest and silence?

MRS. COLNEY (*composedly*)—No. I was waiting for you.

THIRLWALL (*visibly uneasy*)—Yes? Thanks.

MRS. COLNEY (*persisting*)—I knew you wanted to see me alone.

THIRLWALL—As ever.

MRS. COLNEY—And I thought it were kindest to let you have done with it as soon as possible.

THIRLWALL (*loftily*)—With what, for instance?

MRS. COLNEY (*rising and carrying a low stool to the side of the couch and sitting at his feet*)—Hal, dear, haven't you learned yet that I can read you, down to your last, least thought? I have had practice, you know—twelve years of practice. I was younger than Anne is when I began.

THIRLWALL (*brought up to the fence at last, and taking it*)—Then I am forestalled. Feminine intuition, or whatever it is, has been before me to whisper in your ear—that which I therefore need not tell.

MRS. COLNEY—In substance. But I should like to hear the words from you—from your own lips.

THIRLWALL—To what end?

MRS. COLNEY (*mockingly*)—That the knife may be turned in the wound, of course. It is the way of women, you know.

THIRLWALL (*annoyed*)—I don't know. Fancy anyone's knowing anything about women!

MRS. COLNEY—Oh, my dear! Surely it has not come to the pass where you rail in platitudes about our sex—the last refuge of boys or of the vanquished! We have always spoken plainly. What has been could not have been without that. Let it be so now. You mean that you didn't expect me to take it in this way. Hal, did you think I would rend my garments and cling about your knees?

THIRLWALL—Don't be absurd, Violet! Hardly that.

MRS. COLNEY—But you did think I would reproach you. Ah! yes, you did (*laying her hand on his arm*). Yet I have always left you free, have

I not—absolutely free to come or go?

THIRLWALL—I never cared to go.

MRS. COLNEY—Not far, to be sure; though there have been strayings. Did you fancy I didn't know? (*Laughing.*) I knew. Well, it could hardly have lasted forever. I used to try to think it could. But it was too Utopian; too unnatural.

THIRLWALL (*contemplatively*)—It was not unnatural.

MRS. COLNEY—But it was. You yourself have said so, in a different mood, time and again. Our love was an exotic from the land of the Vita Nuova and of Petrarch. It seemed to flourish for a while; but it was bound to fade away. It was not in the spirit of a material age. We were visionaries, you and I.

THIRLWALL (*cynically*)—You a visionary! A woman of the world from your cradle up, you were.

MRS. COLNEY (*shrugging her shoulders*)—No, I think not. I was a child when we first met—a child two years younger than Anne is now. For all that, I was a wife, and unhappy. You were good to me when no one else was. It was not the love of a woman of the world I gave you. You know that. My soul! how I have adored you! There! Oh, don't shrivel up! It is not the preliminary to clinging about your knees. I promise that.

THIRLWALL (*reproachfully*)—If you had adored me you would have married me when I begged you to, not once but a hundred times. You can't expect a mere man to rise to the rarefied atmosphere of such adoration and such scruples as yours.

MRS. COLNEY (*wearily*)—*Recommendations!* You will never understand, I suppose. You will never admit my point of view—much as you may rejoice at it now.

THIRLWALL—That you are, in the sight of heaven, Colney's wife still, until a lingering Providence shall see fit to remove him from the earth he encumbers? Decidedly not.

MRS. COLNEY (*resignedly*)—However, that doesn't matter now. It

was sweet while it lasted, our love—and it was real. After all, we have done a good deal, in times like these, to have proved its possibility for twelve long years.

THIRLWALL (*moving uncomfortably*)—It might have been forever.

MRS. COLNEY—If I had married you? I doubt it very much—and I could not have expected it. The example of marital fidelity I should have been setting you would not have been the best. You would still have met Anne—or some other—probably; and who would I have been to reproach you if you had chosen to leave me for her? (*Brings herself back with an effort.*) But we are wasting precious last moments, we who never stopped to recriminate before. What you came in search of me for was to tell me that you love Anne?

THIRLWALL—Not having counted on the feminine intuition—yes.

MRS. COLNEY—It was not so much my intuition as your “enforced ceremony,” I think.

THIRLWALL (*sneering*)—At any rate, it was obliging of you to save me an unwelcome task, certainly—not to say unconventional.

MRS. COLNEY—It makes it easier for you. You, even you, would have found a difficulty in beginning. You must admit that I have always smoothed the path of your desires.

THIRLWALL—When they led from you.

MRS. COLNEY (*ignoring*)—I have tried never to put obstacles in your way. I have loved, and accepted your love, without too much protestation. And for the rest, I have left you free—absolutely unbound (*coolly and judicially*). Anne will not do that.

THIRLWALL (*loftily*)—Certainly not. She will be my wife. She will have bought me with herself. She will have the right to bind me.

MRS. COLNEY—Yet you are one whom bonds will chafe.

THIRLWALL—Is it your aim to discourage me?

MRS. COLNEY—No. I am not attempting that. It would be futile, and

I am not given to futilities. But you will put the construction most flattering to yourself on what I am going to say, of course. (*Rises, goes to tea table and lights lamp under kettle; then takes a chair at a distance from him.*) You will think I am making a desperate effort to get you back. You ought to know me better after all these years, but you don't. However, I shall risk the misconstruction.

THIRLWALL—It is certainly delightful, the thorough-going cad you make me out.

MRS. COLNEY—Not that. Only just a man who is vexed with me when I haven't done nothin', and won't never do it again. (*Resolutely.*) But I fly off at tangents. This is what I meant to say. I have studied it out from the first day I watched you and Anne together. I saw at once how it was going. Anne is very young, and very beautiful, and very pure. (*Smiling.*) You like to hear her praised, don't you? But have you ever thought that this white-flame purity of hers is the very thing you have most to dread? She is of those women who make no excuses, who have no imagination. She could not commit a fault herself, and a fault has no place in her scheme of things. She would be without pity or understanding. With her it is good or it is bad—no midway.

THIRLWALL—So that, if someone were to enlighten her concerning me—yourself, for instance—?

MRS. COLNEY (*gently*)—That is unjust, as well as stupid. Go on.

THIRLWALL—I beg pardon. It was. You must make allowances for me. I am not too well pleased with myself.

MRS. COLNEY—I know.

THIRLWALL—But if someone were to enlighten her, you think she would condemn me—is that it?

MRS. COLNEY—And unheard, yes. But not until it was brought home to her forcibly. If someone were to tell her merely that you have lived the life of your kind, it would not have much meaning to her. She would hardly grasp it. It would be too

vague. Perhaps she might understand later—after she married you.

THIRLWALL—You are certainly thorough. You are not sparing me.

MRS. COLNEY (*smiling enigmatically*)—No, to be sure. The first time it is really borne in upon Anne what the life you have led has been, there will be borne in upon *you* the full beauty of character of a woman who has all the virtues save only charity. "Like a little wax Madonna, she is holy in the place," is Anne; but she is pitiless; you will never know how pitiless until you realize it in one sickening wave.

THIRLWALL (*sarcastically*)—And you assure me that this is not discouragement?

MRS. COLNEY—It does not even seek to be. You like that white purity now. What you adore in her most is that she has kept herself unspotted from the world—from what you understand to be the world. (*Begins to make tea.*)

THIRLWALL (*leaving couch and taking a chair. Critically*)—I wonder why it is that women like you seem to have a standing grudge against young and innocent girls.

MRS. COLNEY—You will have to define just what a woman like me is before I can answer that. (*Gives him a cup of tea and brings the low stool to his feet again.*) You have not asked her to be your wife yet, have you?

THIRLWALL (*shortly*)—No.

MRS. COLNEY—You wanted to get my formal permission first—your release—who have never been bound?

THIRLWALL—Yes.

MRS. COLNEY—It was good of you. I appreciate it. But you have always been free. There was no hard-driven bargain between us. You are free still. (*Silence for a time. She takes away his cup and sets it down.*) Anne is coming now across the terrace. And she is alone. Tell her that you love her, dear. You have always had the right. She loves you, as I did years ago—just to the extent that some little thing might make her despise you. No—don't be cross with me now—

don't. (*Takes his hand and lays her cheek against it.*) Never mind what I say. Only don't let that little thing come to her knowledge, and you will be very happy—happier than I can ever know. So this is the end of the long years, and you may not even kiss me good-bye! (*Draws away as he bends to her.*) No. You would rather not, I know. Keep your caresses for her. But I may kiss you yet—you who have been so much, so much to me—and—so little. (*Catching his hand and pressing it to her lips.*) Good-bye.

II

MISS STUART (*entering*)—Where is Mrs. Colney? I saw her by the window a moment ago, I thought.

THIRLWALL (*rising and hovering about her*)—You did. She has been giving me my tea. And she left me, as her representative, to perform the same service for you. She was called away. May I take your coat and hat?

MISS STUART (*surrendering coat*)—Not the hat. (*Sits by tea table.*) Do you think you can really give me my tea?

THIRLWALL—I can try. (*Brings it to her and takes chair on opposite side of tea table. Uncomfortable pause.*)

MISS STUART (*speech at any price*)—I dare say Mrs. Colney is very busy. A houseful of even the best guests, as we all are, must be a responsibility. I don't see how one can keep house.

THIRLWALL (*abruptly*)—Suppose you try it—for me. (*Possesses himself of her hand.*) Will you, Anne—will you let me love you? Will you love me, ever so little?

(*Inaudible reply.*)

THIRLWALL (*usual penitent rapture*)—I know I don't deserve it, sweetheart. I—

MISS STUART (*in one breath*)—You do. Yes, you do. I—I love you.

(*Interval.*)

THIRLWALL—You can never, never understand, little sweetheart, how much happier you have made me—

and how much better. (*With the laudable idea of confession that is actuated by desire to cheat tattlers.*) My life has not been any too good—

MISS STUART—Don't! I don't care. It doesn't matter. I should love you just the same—more, if you had (*searching for the crime*)—if you had murdered somebody!

(*Another interval.*)

THIRLWALL (*bending forward, elbow on tea table and chin in palm. Rapturous expression*)—I wonder if you know how beautiful you are, my darling!

MISS STUART (*pale, eyes of horror, gasping for breath*)—Oh! Oh! Oh-h!

THIRLWALL (*springing up*)—Anne, sweetheart, what is it? What is the matter?

MISS STUART (*pushing him off*)—Don't! Don't touch me! Oh! go away.

THIRLWALL (*hurt and frightened*)—When you can tell me, I should like to know what this may mean. I don't understand.

MISS STUART (*incoherently*)—You said the very same thing to her, just that way!

THIRLWALL—To whom? What way? For pity's sake, what is all this?

MISS STUART—That other woman—the beautiful one with the yellow hair—and the dreadful gown.

THIRLWALL (*authoritatively*)—Now, Anne, see here. You absolutely must be reasonable. This is foolish. Tell me what you mean.

MISS STUART (*controlling herself and setting her lips*)—Well, listen.

THIRLWALL (*under his breath*)—Did Violet mean that?

MISS STUART—You remember the beautiful woman with the yellow hair? (*Angrily.*) You do, too. In Paris, years ago. I was only a little girl, and I had almost forgotten; but I remembered—I remembered when you said that. You said it to her. I heard you.

THIRLWALL (*losing his temper*)—Said it to whom, confound it? What woman with yellow hair and dreadful gowns are you talking about?

MISS STUART—You know well enough. In the restaurant on the

Rue de la Paix, ever so long ago. She was there with you at supper. I was there with papa. He thought I was too little to notice things. But I noticed you and her. I didn't understand then, but when I was older I did. And I do now. (*Begins to moan again.*)

THIRLWALL—This is all pure nonsense, it seems to me.

MISS STUART—It is not. It's the truth. You know it is. When you leaned forward and said that, I recalled it. It all came back to me—in a horrible flash. You said the very same words to her, in the very same way. I heard you.

THIRLWALL—Even supposing I did—?

MISS STUART—And when I used to think I had seen your face somewhere before, I fancied it was just because heaven had meant us to care for each other. (*Laughing harshly.*) It wasn't that.

THIRLWALL (*hopelessly*)—One of the "little things."

MISS STUART (*severely*)—You know it was you!

THIRLWALL (*indifferently*)—I dare say.

MISS STUART—You remember it?

THIRLWALL—Not in the least.

MISS STUART—There have been so many women, I suppose.

THIRLWALL—I suppose so.

MISS STUART—And you have said the same thing to all of them?

THIRLWALL—Perhaps.

MISS STUART—How horrible! And you don't even care! You aren't even ashamed!

THIRLWALL—It was so long ago. Before I knew you—and a better sort of love.

MISS STUART—There is only one sort of love.

THIRLWALL—Good Lord! no, there ain't. There are ten thousand kinds. Mine for you is a faith, a religion, a worship. For no other woman have I had such a regard! If you throw me over I shall go to the dogs. (*Sees a good stroke; follows it up.*) I shall go to the devil; drink myself to death—or choose a quicker way. I will

have lost (*dramatically*) my faith in woman and in God!

MISS STUART (*wavering*)—I don't think you can have much. (*More firmly.*) No. You have lied to the other woman, the other *women*; you will lie to me! You already have. And such a woman!

THIRLWALL—Can't you see that it is precisely because it was "such a woman" that it doesn't matter? If you were less pure yourself you would understand (*To himself.*) Violet was right about that.

MISS STUART—I should not care to buy charity at such a price.

THIRLWALL (*sotto voce*)—"Tinkling cymbals!"

MISS STUART—Besides, I don't love you any more. I really don't. My love is dead!

THIRLWALL—It is a poor sort of love that such a little thing will kill!

MISS STUART (*aghast*)—A little thing! (*Rises and retreats.*) A little thing!

THIRLWALL (*grasping her arm*)—Anne, my dearest! my sweetheart! You can't mean to leave me like this! You can't be so cruel! You must love me! You do!

MISS STUART (*disengaging herself*)—Don't touch me, please. I believe—I really believe, I detest you. (*Goes out.*)

III

A HALF-HOUR later. Mrs. Colney's boudoir. MRS. COLNEY in long chair, playing with a long-stemmed rose taken from vase beside her. THIRLWALL standing, hands clasped behind his back. White, drawn, plainly desperate.

MRS. COLNEY—It certainly came sooner than I expected, far sooner. I can think of so many things to say that fit the case. But I am afraid they wouldn't help matters. And they are so trite—as trite as the situation. "Short and sweet" would answer. But "I told you so" is the most insistent.

THIRLWALL—You are all hard,

every last one of you! As cold and as hard as steel.

MRS. COLNEY (*raising her eyes slowly to his, with a smile*)—You know that I am not cold, dear.

THIRLWALL (*reaching out his hands to her, desperate, repentant*)—Violet, you were right! You have always been right. The old love was best—and truest. Let me love you again.

MRS. COLNEY—And Anne?

THIRLWALL—That is over; done with. One cannot love an unforgiving woman long. But you can forgive.

MRS. COLNEY (*quietly*)—And you think I can forgive?

THIRLWALL (*going toward her*)—I know it.

MRS. COLNEY—You are right (*motioning him back*), quite right. I can forgive. But have you ever thought why it might be? Have you

ever thought that it might be because I have ceased to care?

THIRLWALL (*backing away. Stupefied, incredulous*)—And you—and you, too?

MRS. COLNEY—How classic! And I, too! We are all hard—hard as steel!

THIRLWALL (*violently*)—Do you realize that you are sending me utterly adrift?

MRS. COLNEY—No. Two hours since you sent me adrift—

THIRLWALL—And this is the end—?

MRS. COLNEY—It was the end two hours ago!

THIRLWALL (*takes her hand and kisses it*)—Good-bye.

(*She draws the hand away, and the door shuts behind him.*)

MRS. COLNEY (*writhing on the floor and burying her face*)—Oh, my dear! my dear!



CRONIES

LOVE came in with me to sup, though the hour was late,
Stopped my wheel and brimmed my cup, at my hearthstone sate,
Kissed mine eyes and bade me cheer—
I forgot 'twas dead o' year.

Swung the latch upon the wind, loud one called my name;
Seeking gentle Love to find, neighbor Duty came;
Set a candle's steady beam,
Whirled the wheel and broke the dream.

One went forth and spake no word (dark the night and keen),
One went forth—aye, all unheard, aye, and all unseen;
In the dawn my wheel it whirred, bright my hearth and clean;
But one stayeth always here:
Duty bides. 'Tis dead o' year.

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD.



THE SIGN OF SIGNS

CRAWFORD—Would you call them rich people?

CRABSHAW—Why, man, they're so rich they buy their Christmas presents at such expensive places that they can send them to their friends without removing the price tags,

THE LION TAMER

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

MRS. DE COURCEY-HARTWELL—hyphen Hartwell, if you please—was a patron of the arts. Of course, envious people said she was a lion hunter; but this statement may be taken with a grain of salt when it is considered that those who made it were just on the outer edge, in fact, on the very fringe of that society of which the De Courcey-Hartwells formed the brilliant and resplendent centre.

It is quite true that the lady in question had a somewhat inordinate fancy for people who had done something. But much may be forgiven one who has good manners, a better cook and a surpassing cellar. When, added to all this, one's family has been wealthy for a half-century—twenty years puts an American out of the class of the *nouveau riche*—all the arrows of criticism are turned.

The young men who went to Mrs. De Courcey-Hartwell's lectures, literary evenings and strange, unaccountable musicals were a little prone to laugh over the affairs; for a brief moment to envy the lion his share of the girls' adoring attention, and then to wander off to the smoking-room, whence they would emerge, after the programme, to congratulate their hostess on the success of her entertainment.

This devoted patron of the arts was not only fair, but was wise for the thirty-eight years to which she owned, and she was not fooled. She used to say to Archie Courtney, who was a famous shirker: "Ah, never mind, Archie, if the mental pabulum I have provided was not to your taste; take heart, supper is now on." So it came

to pass that they separated her foibles from herself, and laughed at them, but never at her.

Mrs. De Courcey-Hartwell's husband was in leather, as his father and his grandfather—he had a grandfather—had been before him. He looked on complacently at his wife's artistic endeavors, ever ready to pay the bills, which, whatever the catechism may say, is man's highest duty, especially if that man be a husband. Some malicious gossips said that they were still in love with each other after fifteen years of married life. But most of their acquaintances were charitable enough to give them the benefit of the doubt, even though the fact that the husband enjoyed himself in his own home looked dark. Perhaps, however, it was only a pose, just because they were rich enough to be odd.

"Well, what has our hostess on for to-night?" asked Forsythe Brandon of Archie Courtney as they went bowling up the street; "is it a reformed burglar, a captured Mahatma or an African Prince?"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Archie, scornfully. "Why, old man, you're talking in your sleep."

"It can't be, it can't be; oh, don't tell me that it is a party without a lion!"

"Certainly not. Didn't you read your card?"

"No, I just glanced at it and saw that it was the De Courcey-Hartwells', knew that there would be something good to eat, cried 'My tablets, my tablets!' and here I am."

"Glutton."

"Oh, most worthy exemplar!"

Archie laughed.

"Well, it's a real card this time. We're invited to meet that new writer who has been making such a stir. Worthington is his name."

"Whew!" whistled Brandon; "you don't say! Why, I thought he was playing the high and mighty, scorn-ing society and all that!"

"I suppose he has been, but they say his appearance to-night is all Tom Van Kleeck's doing. He and Tom are as thick as thieves."

"A strange pair."

"I don't know whether it's the author's liking for the Van or for the man."

"Possibly the Van."

"I don't know; Van Kleeck's rather a white chap."

Brandon murmured something about Whitechapel, but Archie could not countenance the remark, and im-mediately froze into unconsciousness.

Except for Tom Van Kleeck it seems hardly possible that Worthington and Mrs. De Courcay-Hartwell could have met, the man and the woman were so dissimilar in character.

Worthington had come down from Canada a few years before, when his books began to succeed in the United States. He made good acquaint-ances, but went out very little. There was something of the free-dom and breeziness of his own woods about him—something charming but untamable—and he did not talk about his ART. He loved nothing quite so much as to get into a disreputable smoking-jacket, through the pocket of which the fire from his old brier had burned a volcanic-looking hole, and to loll in slippers ease alone with a book or with a few choice spirits.

He did not pose, or seem to pose, save that he wore a great shock of unruly black hair. When his friends twitted him about this he told them, with a laugh, that he was "knot pated," and did not dare to wear his hair short. They smiled, and in re-venge he had his hair cut, after which a committee waited upon him to beg

him not to do it again. The chair-man of this committee plainly told him that he looked like a phrenolo-gist's specially prepared subject, and they were all sorry for two weeks. From that time his hair went unmo-lested and unremarked.

He was a sociable fellow, outside of society, easy and gracious. The boys called him Dick, but he was Richard Barry Worthington under his stories, poems and articles and on the title pages of the books that had made him famous. Lit-erary men put in all the name they can, presumably to add weight to whatever they offer the heartless editor.

It was Dick, rather than Richard Barry, who entered Mrs. De Courcay-Hartwell's drawing-room with Tom Van Kleeck on the night when a few friends had been invited to meet him. Forsythe Brandon was standing be-side Helen Archer.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "the man is well dressed!"

"Why, why not?"

"And he hasn't stumbled over his feet once."

"Mr. Brandon, aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Not in the least. Just look at that bow; and he didn't forget to speak to his hostess."

"I think you are very silly, and I do think he is very good form."

"That's just it; that's what I re-sent. Don't you know it's very bad form for a genius to be good form? He might, at least, have respected tradition enough to be shabby and have red hands—" And he sighed tragically.

Helen laughed, and moved away.

Much later in the evening Tom Van Kleeck wandered disconsolately in from the smoking-room, where the lion had taken refuge as in his lair; someone had mentioned a read-ing, and he had incontinently fled.

"What's the matter, Tom?" asked Millicent Martin. "You look like a hired mourner at a funeral."

"Don't joke, Millicent. I'm in an awful fix. You know I am partly re-

sponsible for Worthington's being here. But I'm afraid I've offended both him and our hostess. Everyone is expecting him to read something. Mrs. De Courcey-Hartwell sends me to feel him on the subject, and he absolutely refuses to do a thing."

"In other words," laughed Millicent, "the lion refuses to roar."

"Quite so."

"Where is he?"

"In the smoking-room, yarning it with a lot of fellows."

"Oh, well, don't be disheartened. I'll help you out."

"Can you?"

"We'll try. Can you get him in? Say there is to be some reading. I'll do the rest. Mrs. De Courcey-Hartwell shall not be disappointed."

Millicent's eyes were twinkling as she made her way toward her hostess, and Tom Van Kleek went back into the smoking-room with hope in his heart.

"Say, old man," he addressed Worthington, "come in with me. There's to be some doings, and they'll expect you. Oh, that's all right," he said, in answer to a questioning look; "they're not going to call on you to read."

"All right, I'll go, if I'm to be entertained," the author replied, bluntly, but with a smile in his eyes.

There was quite a little flutter when he re-entered the drawing-room—the complacent sound of rustling silks.

The hostess was always very simple in her announcements. She said now only: "Miss Millicent Martin has kindly consented to recite for us."

There was a faint patter of applause and a few disappointed looks. It was well that Worthington did not see the roguish look in Millicent's eyes as she began:

"I know that I am very daring, but in honor of the guest whom our hostess has so kindly invited us to meet"—here she bowed slightly to Worthington—"I will recite his exquisite poem, 'The Troubadour.'"

Worthington groaned in spirit, but escape was cut off.

Millicent began. Her elocution

was—well, bad; oh, but it was bad, and the author almost wept. When she was half through, he whispered, in an agonized voice: "Oh, Tom, Tom, don't let her do it again! I'll do anything; tell them I'll read. I'll do anything, but don't let that girl do it again!"

Van Kleek beamed. "Awfully good of you, old man!" he said, but Worthington only sighed.

When Millicent was done it fell to Van Kleek's lot to inform the assembled guests of the author's condescension. Then Worthington rose. He read well always, but to-night he was magnificent in his fury. He was defending himself against the insinuation of insipidity that the girl's interpretation had put upon his work, and all the fire and earnestness of his nature went into his rendition of the lines. The women from the halls and the men from the smoking-room crowded the doorways, and there was a storm of applause as he sat down.

"I have always maintained that you should be called 'Militant,'" whispered Van Kleek as Millicent passed him.

As for Worthington, he was angry with himself, and altogether felt very much the fool. People had congratulated him until he was tired.

"I shall be spouting at afternoon teas next," he told his friend, savagely, when they were alone for a moment; but just then Millicent came up, and Tom moved guiltily away.

"I enjoyed it so much," she said, holding out her hand.

"Thank you."

She waited, smiling up into his face.

"And have you nothing to say of my work?"

"It—it—was charming," he stammered.

"Which, translated, means abominable."

He wondered why that girl should stand there laughing at him with her marvelous eyes. It annoyed him, and it pleased him. He answered:

"I am very, very sure you under-rate yourself."

"Fie! Mr. Worthington, fie! I know it was abominable, because I tried to make it so."

He looked up quickly.

"I hope you will forgive me, for I have a confession to make. I am not heroic or self-sacrificing, and I want you to know that I can read better than I did, and that I felt what I read more deeply than I expressed. But—but—you are a lion, you know."

"Oh, am I?"

He was beginning to see, and the red mounted to his face.

"Yes," she said, "and you were very unsatisfactory; you would not

roar, so I read badly, to compel you to read in self-defense. There!"

He struggled between anger and admiration at her audacity. The latter triumphed. He laughed a low, amused laugh. "If I am a lion, you are a lion tamer," he said. "May I come to see you some day?"

Her apprehensions fled, and she joined in his merriment.

"Will you promise not to be very fierce?"

"I promise to 'roar me as gently as a sucking dove.'"

"Then you may come," she said.

"Good-night, Sir Lion."

"Good-night, my Lady Lion Tamer."



THE BARGAIN-COUNTER PRESENT

HE bought for her a reticule,
She thought it was a nice bag,
Until she found the stupid fool
Had not removed the pricetag.



THE ONE EXCEPTION

MADGE—You'd better not trust that girl with a book. She never returns one.

MARJORIE—But she won't keep this—it's a diary.



IT'S DIFFERENT NOW

HER husband, this year, I am thinking,
His vices won't lay on the shelf;
She won't veto his smoking and drinking,
For she knows how it is herself.



SPARED THE HUMILIATION

HAWKINS—Colonel Blood never knows when he has had enough.
ROBBINS—No; he's unconscious by that time.

BREAKING THE ICE

By Henry Gallup Paine

“COME, old man, tell us how you ever did it.” The women had just left the dining-room, and Caldwell took his cigar, his liqueur glass and himself over to where his host sat at the end of the table.

“Ever did what?”

“Ever plucked up courage to ask Regina Armitage to marry you, in the first place; ever got her to accept you, in the second.”

“Oh, that’s my secret,” said Bodley, with a satisfied smile.

“Of course it is,” assented Caldwell; “but it’s time you shared it with us, the friends of your youth. This is the fifth of these little anniversary dinners you have given, and every one of the original house party is here.

“You all remember the occasion,” Caldwell continued to the other men; “but you may not all know how Tommy came to be invited. My sisters had asked Frank Galt for Regina, but Frank spoiled everything by proposing to her two days before we were to start. This left us one man short, and the next morning I ran into Tommy Bodley in Ike Bascom’s office, with a yard of tape in his hands and the perspiration running down his face like rain, though it was Midwinter. I knew he was pretty much of a lamb, and that the shearers were ready; so, half in pity, I asked him if he wouldn’t leave the ticker for the toboggan and come with us to Vermont for ten days.

“‘Yes, thank you,’ answered Tommy, moping his brow; ‘you’re just in time, too.’

“So I went home and told the girls

that I had secured a man; that he was the shyest, most diffident man of my acquaintance; that he had never been known to speak to a girl, and that I believed the only reason he had consented to join a house party was that he had lost his all in Wall street and wanted to get away with his clothes.

“‘Fetch him along,’ said Addie; ‘Regina deserves nothing better.’

“Oh, but it was fun to watch those two! There was Regina, cold, frigid, distant as ever, yet treating Tommy with that lofty, remote affability for which she was noted when the object was an ineligible man. And there was Tommy, shy as a kitten, reddening whenever she spoke to him, rarely speaking first, and then so scared that he couldn’t find the end of his sentence.

“The last day came, and everybody paired off for a walk. Each couple returned—in time; Tommy and Regina a little behind time—and, by Jove! if they weren’t engaged! Now, Tommy, how did you ever pierce her reserve? How did you break the ice?”

“Oh, *she* broke the ice,” replied Bodley, with his inscrutable smile; “and since I have admitted so much, I suppose I’d better go on and tell the rest of the story.

“I was a bashful youth. Anybody could see that; but what people couldn’t see was that the bashfulness was all on the outside. Internally I was debonair enough, but somehow I was never able to show myself in my true colors. There was something about most people, especially a pretty woman, that shut me up like an oyster. I had no accomplish-

ments, I had no fortune, I could see no reason for anyone to take the slightest interest in me. But I saw other men, no cleverer than I was, carrying off prize-winners in the social beauty show. However, I noticed that they were all pretty well fixed. It occurred to me that if I could only increase my bank account I might get some woman to tolerate me long enough to find out what a bully fellow I was ready to be; so, in desperation, I began plunging in Wall street. I struck it in the midst of a lively flurry that knocked the market endways. Everybody was rattled, and I lost my head completely, bought when I was advised to sell, sold when I was told to buy, and the consequence was that when Billy Caldwell came into Ike Bascom's office that February morning I was just grasping the fact that I had cleaned up a hot half-million. I knew I was the last man to grace a house party, and I expected to have a miserable time; but I was so afraid I should lose all I had made if I stayed in town, that I accepted on the instant.

"When we met in Billy's private car and I had stumbled through the formality of introductions all round I found myself sitting next to Regina Armitage. I had often seen her and long admired her, and I knew her reputation for icy reserve. Feeling at ease as regarded money matters, it occurred to me that she would afford me excellent practice in developing my social qualities. I determined to make the most violent love to her. I was quite confident that she would never suspect the truth, and as well that my grotesque efforts would produce no effect on her marble heart.

"But three days had not passed before I discovered that I was no longer acting a part. I was really, hopelessly, in love. Perhaps the social solitude, for which my diffident manners were responsible, had made me a keener observer than most men; but anyhow, I soon perceived that Regina's frigid demeanor was simply a mask that she wore to hide a warm and sympathetic nature, a coat-of-

mail to protect herself from the attacks of those who she believed were attracted to her merely by her beauty or by her wealth, or by the potent combination. I could see that she endured me largely because of a profound pity for my painful bashfulness and for the financial misfortune that she believed, on Billy's report, had befallen me.

"I now began to lay siege to her heart in real earnest, searching, with a lover's keen perception, for the chinks in her armor, only to find that, through my awkward aim, my shafts were glancing harmlessly off from its polished surface.

"The last day of our stay had come, and I could not see that I had made the least progress in overcoming either my diffidence or her reserve. Since a long walk was the program for the day, we set out, as in duty bound, and wandered on for hours, scarcely speaking a word. At last we stood on the bank of a narrow stream. It was covered with a thin coating of ice.

"'What are you waiting for?' asked Regina. 'Aren't you going to cross the river, now you've come to it?'

"'I'm afraid it won't bear us,' I replied.

"'Afraid! I might have known what your answer would be!' cried Regina. 'How do you ever expect to get anywhere or anything unless you overcome your infantile timidity? Follow me, chicken-heart! I'm not afraid of anything in the world!' and she stepped down on the treacherous ice.

"'Oh, yes, you are!' I retorted, stung into boldness by her disdainful words. 'You are afraid somebody will marry you for your beauty or your money.'

"'I'm not!' she exclaimed, with an indignant stamp of her foot. It was the first and the only time I ever saw Regina lose her temper, and the result was disastrous. There was a crash, and the ice gave way. Regina uttered a characteristically feminine scream and made an instinctive feminine grab for her skirts. The stream

was not deep, and there she stood, up to her knees in the icy water, holding on to her dress with both hands.

"Ow! give me your hand and help me out; I'm freezing to death!" she cried. Her indignation went out of her mind as the water came into her boots.

"Don't move!" I ordered. I saw my opportunity and I took it. 'Don't turn round, and don't let go of your clothes. We're miles from the house, and you can never walk back if you drop your petticoats in the water. Just let me manage it, and I'll get you out with nothing worse than wet feet.' I knelt on the bank and, reaching down, caught her round the waist, as she stood facing away from me. 'Now lean back—'way back,' I directed; and with a powerful

effort, for she is no featherweight, I pulled her out of the water and set her down on the bank beside me. I was not a dancing man, and I had never been so close to her before; I did not know when I might be so close to her again, so before I released her I gave her a nice, big, round kiss on the cheek.

"I had no idea how she would take it, but I felt it was then or never. Nothing could have surprised me more than what she said. She sat up straight, with her wet feet sticking out over the water, and gave me one searching, penetrating look.

"Well!" she exclaimed, 'I guess you'll do.'

"And the general verdict seems to be," concluded Bodley, "that I've done pretty well."



HER SEALSKIN SACQUE

ON some far-off Pacific rock
 'Mid wind and wave 'twas born,
 And grew to meet the billow's shock
 With free and careless scorn;
 Until it left, at Fate's command,
 A gentler realm to seek,
 And hastened over sea and land
 To rest against her cheek.

How false to call those hands unkind
 That reach across the seas,
 And levy tribute where they find
 The swarming rookeries!
 They bring but change from isles all bare,
 From swirling surge and storm,
 Unto a heavenly haven where
 They keep my lady warm.

And hence, oh, pity not the seals,
 That, dying, learn to live;
 For doubtless Death to them reveals
 The boon it has to give!
 And I a thousand times would die,
 A thousand torments taste,
 At last against her cheek to lie
 Or clasp her slender waist!

EDWIN L. SABIN.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

LET me forget her face!
 So fresh, so lovely, the abiding place
 Of tears and smiles that won my heart to her;
 Of dreams and moods that moved my soul's dim deeps,
 As strong winds stir
 Sad waters where the starlight glimmering sleeps.
 In every lineament the mind can trace,
 Let me forget her face!

Let me forget her form!
 Soft and seductive, that contained each charm,
 Each grace the sweet word maidenhood implies;
 And all the sensuous youth of line and curve,
 That makes men's eyes
 Bondsmen of beauty eager aye to serve.
 In every part that memory can warm,
 Let me forget her form!

Let me forget her, God!
 Her who made honeyed love a bitter rod
 To scourge my heart with, barren with despair;
 To tear my soul with, sick with vain desire!
 Oh, hear my prayer!
 Out of the hell of love's unquenchable fire
 I cry to thee, with face against the sod,
 Let me forget her, God!

MADISON CAWEIN.



NOT INTERFERING

MR. BILDAD—Wife, the ship is sinking!
 MRS. BILDAD (*who is terribly seasick*)—Well, let her sink, John.
 BILDAD—Well, ain't I a-letting her?



A CHRISTMAS EPITAPH

POOR Youngpop sighs; his baby boy
 Has gone to be a saint.
 He took his green and yellow toy
 And ate off all the paint.

THE TRICK OF THE TEACUPS

By Belle Moses

MISS LEE'S one hobby was fine china—not the usual mass of bric-à-brac, but exclusively teacups. There were large cups and small cups, fat cups and slender cups, thick cups and thin cups, cups of every known design and manufacture. She loved to take a cup by the rim or handle, invert it and feast her eyes on the mark beneath, and she cared nothing for the rest of the porcelain world. She was no tea-drinker; it was an æsthetic love she indulged in, and at afternoon teas this eager little lady flitted among the guests in her quaint way, watching her opportunity to examine the marks on their respective teacups.

She looked like a bit of old china herself; her delicate face was of cameo cut, without lines or wrinkles, and her tiny, graceful figure was free of any sign of age. Time and Miss Lee had nothing to do with each other; wherein she resembled Shakespeare. She had only two cares in life—one was Felicia, and the other—a hitherto unsuccessful search for two teacups, with the necessary accompaniment of saucers, to round out an otherwise perfect and priceless dozen. Miss Lee had secured them abroad, and was so reticent concerning the amount she paid for them that her friends respected her silence.

Felicia was her niece, her namesake and her ward, the only daughter of her only brother, Charles, who followed a young wife to an early grave; so the Felicias—past and present—dwelt side by side in peace and amity.

A striking young woman was Felicia

the Second. Her aunt took great pride in her social launching and in her remarkable success, and often caught herself building gorgeous castles for the girl. She determined that dear Charles's daughter should marry well, so when the sun of George McFarland rose on the horizon it was forced to pierce mists of cool civility and baffling politeness on the little lady's part.

McFarland was an artist of no small talent and of immeasurable ambition. He came over from England eager for work, and armed with letters that gave him at once the entrée into social and artistic circles. The first thing he did on reaching New York was to present these letters; the second was to secure a fitting studio, and the third was to fall hopelessly in love with the younger Miss Lee.

These events followed one another in natural sequence; his introduction to the older Miss Lee secured an invitation to dine; in the interim he found his abiding-place, and on the eventful night, as he sat beside Felicia, the climax was reached.

An independent spirit in him first attracted Felicia, while her aunt discovered a kindred soul, for he, too, delighted in artistic china, though his preferences were more general. Indeed, in his studio were many beautiful specimens—the work of his own hands—which could have compared very favorably with many celebrated bits of pottery. Even Miss Lee was forced to own this when, on the occasion of her first visit, she examined his treasures.

"But for the absence of the mark beneath, we might be tempted to

believe these genuine," she observed, toying with some exquisite teacups—and this from Miss Lee, who knew her china as the Parisian knows his Paris, was complimentary in the extreme. The Misses Lee had been informally invited to take tea in McFarland's studio, and while he and Felicia talked the old lady wandered at will among the magnetic teacups at the other end of the room. McFarland spoke earnestly about his life and his career, and Felicia threw off her drawing-room restraint and grew delightfully sweet and girlish.

"Aunt Felicia is happy," she said. "I really believe that if she could find her two missing teacups she would be a perfectly contented woman; but she is always seeking, seeking."

"Tell me about them," asked McFarland, more to hear the girl's rich voice than from interest in the narrative.

"Aunt Felicia came across the set year before last in Italy, and I, of course, was traveling with her, else probably I should not have seen them. They are of Royal Worcester, and very beautiful, but my aunt was able to secure only ten cups and saucers. My private opinion is that two have been broken and cannot be replaced, though I should not dare hint at such a thing. She says she will never show the set unless it is completed, and consequently those particular teacups are as much a social mystery as the next engagement," she finished, with a laugh.

Then Miss Lee came suddenly to earth, said some pretty things about their pleasant afternoon, and carried her niece away.

Felicia thought this special Winter the most delightful she had ever spent, and being a most reasonable young woman, she owned to herself that George McFarland was the cause. As for McFarland, he was more deeply in love every time he saw her—and yet he hesitated; he was afraid to put his love forward, so modestly clothed in the world's goods.

For him it was a noble fear, but

unworthy of her. One afternoon he went out to walk off a fit of restlessness. After passing by the Lee mansion three times, with the firm determination not to enter, he relented, on the fourth turn, and rang the bell.

"No, sir, Miss Lee is out, but Miss Felicia is in the library," the servant told him. Would he step into the reception room?

No, he would not step into the reception room; he knew his way to the library; the accommodating Thomas need not announce him—and he brushed past that disapproving individual.

The library door was ajar, and the interior of the room looked very cozy and inviting. A great chair was wheeled up in front of a glowing fire, but from the threshold where McFarland stood there was only the faint suggestion of a feminine presence. The folds of a gray gown swept the floor beside the chair, but the high back hid everything else.

His heart beat fast; he had never had her quite to himself. Most likely she was reading, and the book must be absorbing, or she might have heard his very audible footsteps as he hurried toward her. Just as he reached her side there was a movement, and Felicia's voice sounded, peremptory:

"No, Thomas, I am not at home this afternoon. I do not wish to see visitors."

"In this case there is only one," said McFarland, appearing before her as he spoke. "Thomas disputed my way; but then Thomas had not my incentive. I—well, really, now—I *do* beg your pardon—I'm afraid, unintentionally I *have* intruded." For to his surprise and dismay, Felicia was hurriedly slipping a bedewed handkerchief into her pocket. She had been crying, and there was a crumpled note lying on the floor. McFarland handed it to her, seeing at the same time that the written envelope was in a woman's hand.

"What is the matter?" he asked, brusquely, being an Englishman of feeling.

"I'm angry," said Felicia; "I never cry unless I'm angry, and—and I suppose most girls would give their heads to be in my boots."

"They couldn't wear them." And McFarland gazed admiringly at the pretty slippered feet. "What is one man's meat is another man's poison; I suppose the remark holds good in the case of woman," he observed.

Felicia nodded.

"How did they try to poison you?"

"Oh, please do not ask me."

"But I insist upon knowing. We should surely exchange some confidences, else where's our friendship? Pardon me, there's a card under the chair—a recent visitor?" Picking it up, McFarland read the name of Reginald Bentley, the well-known young millionaire, who had been haunting Felicia.

"I can guess," he said; "this lucky dog has been before me. He has taken the meat and left me the poison—and you—you—" passionately—"you don't care for him; but other women want him—and so women have fallen since the time of Eve. I came here to-day scarcely knowing why I came—until this moment—which shows me the bitterness of my love for you, Felicia. I had hoped—"

"What?" asked the girl. She was looking up at him from the velvet depths of the chair, with wide eyes and parted lips.

"That the love of an honest man would satisfy *you* more than the glitter of this little gold-washed manikin."

"Oh, oh! don't be rude!" warned Felicia, her voice breaking a little.

"I must be just; you do not know what a contemptible little cad he is; I see him at the club, among men. Felicia, Felicia, how *could* you!"

"I—I didn't," she answered, growing redder than ever. "No, sir; not a word until you hear *me*—" and the small hand waved imperatively. "I'm not accustomed to being lectured in this way; I hope the statement I'm about to make will close the interview."

McFarland bowed.

"Mr. Bentley came here this after-

noon," said Felicia, sitting up very straight, "to give me his hand and purse. I have refused to see him many times, but Aunt Felicia is impressed by the social importance of such a match, so the coward screened himself behind a note from her, and offered me his worthless little person. This explanation is the tribute I pay to my own self-esteem. Good-after-noon, Mr. McFarland."

"If you send me away," he said, very quietly, "we may not meet in some time."

She made no reply. She was standing, now, looking tall and stately in the shadowy room, but she did not glance at him as he held out his hand.

"Good-bye," he said.

"No, *au revoir*," she replied, putting her hands behind her.

"We have gone too far for half-measures," he said, steadily. "You know what I want, Felicia, but I—I haven't millions."

He turned abruptly and walked to the door. Felicia caught her breath.

"George!" She scarcely spoke above a whisper, but he heard her.

"Well?"

"Come back—and draw the curtains—there's a draught somewhere—and—and—"

A half-hour later, when they were more rational, they fell to discussing Miss Lee's inevitable displeasure.

"Only the discovery of her teacups could propitiate her, and I can think of nothing more improbable," said Felicia.

McFarland absently patted the hand it was now his privilege to hold. "I might be able to trace them up," he suggested, "if I had a cup and saucer. Do you know where she keeps them?"

"On the top shelf of the china closet. They have never been out of their tissue-paper wrappings."

"She'd never miss them, even though it took me a couple of months for investigation. Get them for me, dearest. I can only promise that I'll guard them with my life, if need be. But I'll secure those teacups if they are to be found."

Felicia left him for a few moments, and when she returned slipped a parcel into his hand.

"I'm afraid of what I've done; I've spent an awful afternoon of qualms and heartaches—and—and the rest," she said, blushing, as she sent him away.

The next day he made a pilgrimage among the dealers, who were deeply interested in the dainty china, and all agreed that such specimens were exceedingly rare. He sent photographs of them to the dealers abroad to obtain information, if he could, concerning the place of manufacture, and a month passed before his patience was rewarded. One dealer wrote that he had discovered, in an obscure little shop, some undecorated teacups and saucers that answered the description, and he sent on a couple of each for inspection and probable purchase.

They proved to be identical in shape and weight, and this fact paved the way for strategy and guile. McFarland set himself to work, and copied Miss Lee's irreproachable Royal Worcester. But he said nothing of his scheme to Felicia; she must be blameless.

When the deed was done, even to the clever firing of the manufacturer's mark, McFarland decided to give a studio tea. He told Felicia that he had secured the teacups; at least, he was candid enough to own, they appeared like the genuine article, and he would have them *en évidence* at the studio.

The guests were many, for he was a great favorite, but Miss Lee and her niece arrived late. McFarland himself came up, solicitous, with one of the alluring teacups for Felicia, and a plate of cakes.

"I know Miss Lee is no tea-drinker," he said, narrowly watching the growing excitement on the older lady's face as her eyes became riveted on Felicia's teacup.

"I think I'll change my mind, if you can bring a teacup like Felicia's," she said; and her voice actually trembled.

"Why, auntie," cried the girl, "you never touch tea, you know!"

"It—it won't be tea—in a cup like that; it will be nectar. Just the least sip," she added, measuring to the first joint of her little finger.

"I have one more cup and saucer like that; I'll bring it if the fellows haven't snapped it up." And McFarland hurried away, well pleased.

Poor Miss Lee was nearly beside herself with excitement. Such a find! She must see the mark and examine the ware!

She grasped the teacup and saucer McFarland brought her with feverish haste, and eagerly drank the little portion of tea. Then she inverted the cup; and sure enough, there was the familiar mark! Her long and ardent quest was ended! She beckoned to McFarland.

"Where did you get these teacups—Felicia's and mine?"

"A dealer picked them up abroad. Are they genuine?" asked McFarland, innocently.

"Genuine! Why, I've searched the world over for them; they are the missing two belonging to my famous set—you're heard of my wonderful Royal Worcester?"

"Oh, yes."

"Now, I must have these, at any cost, at any price!"

"Really, Miss Lee——"

"Yes, I know I'm unpardonably rude! I'll apologize afterward, but I must have them; I tell you *I must!*"

"They are not for sale," said McFarland, quietly.

"What's the matter?" asked Felicia, coming up.

"Your aunt wants to buy my teacups, Miss Lee."

"They belong to my set," pursued the little woman. "Mr. McFarland, you will make me forever your debtor if you will name your price. Please!" and she put the cup and saucer in her plate and clasped her gloved hands.

McFarland glanced at Felicia. "This is pathetic, Miss Lee, and would soften even a harder heart than mine. I'll strike a bargain with you.

If you will give me something of yours which I've coveted ever since I landed in New York, you may have the teacups."

"Very well—anything—even to the half of my fortune. Name it."

"Felicia."

Miss Lee started and looked from one to the other as they stood before her. Then she lifted her treasure-trove and again examined the mark beneath.

"Give me the teacups," she said. And the little blind god laughed.



AFTER THE SERVICE

THE opening hymn? It quite forsook
My memory; you see,
Our hands touched as we held the book,
And that quite fuddled me.

The text? Why, Dolly, I confess
I really failed to hear;
'Twas then I watched that curl, I guess,
That strayed about your ear.

Scored dancing, did he? Ah, I knew
He called us sinful, weak.
You smiled; 'twas just bewitching, too—
That dimple in your cheek.

At prayers I failed to bow, you say?
At benediction, too?
But, Dolly, say, how could I pray
And also look at you?

You think church does me little good?
It does me much, although
I really do not think it would
If *you* should cease to go!

TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.



STRUCK BY THE RESEMBLANCE

LITTLE RODNEY (*manipulating his Christmas toy*)—Hoo-ee, pa!
MR. SCRAPPINGTON—Well, what is it, my son?

LITTLE RODNEY—Why, pa, my jumpin'-jack cuts up just like you do whenever ma asks you for money!

UNAPPRECIATED FAVOR

NELL was flirting with Jim
 Just to see if I'd care;
 It was hard luck for him—
 Nell was flirting with Jim,
 While his chances grew slim
 With Marie, over there.
 Nell was flirting with Jim
 Just to see if I'd care.

S. G. S.



ONLY CONFIRMED HIM

WIFE—I made you what you are, John.
 HUSBAND—No. I was a woman-hater before I married you.



BEGINNING AT HOME

“SHE spends a good deal in charity work, I am told.”
 “Oh, yes, indeed! It was only the other day she paid \$150 for a slumming gown!”



HE HAD REASONS

“YOU should read the book in the original. The translator misses several fine points.”
 “I dare say; but I don't want to risk missing the rest of them.”



INCONTESTABLE PROOF

BELLE—Do you think Chappie loves me?
 GRACE—I know it. He told me to-day that he was going to shave off his mustache so he could devote more thought to you.